

Official quits, accuses Netanyahu of neglecting Russian Jews

TEL AVIV (AP) — The top Israeli liaison with Jews from the former Soviet Union quit Sunday, accusing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of "abandonment" of his constituency. Yaacov Kedmi's resignation letter was written five months ago, but published Sunday — the day Netanyahu formally accepted the popular activist's resignation after the leaver was leaked over the weekend. Kedmi accused the prime minister of "abandoning the Jews of the former Soviet Union, avoiding the responsibility of the state of Israel and deceiving the public with empty, meaningless verbiage." Kedmi is the latest in a long line of senior officials who have expressed disappointment with Netanyahu.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية والراي

Volume 24 Number 7128

AMMAN MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1999, MUHARRAM 10, 1420

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

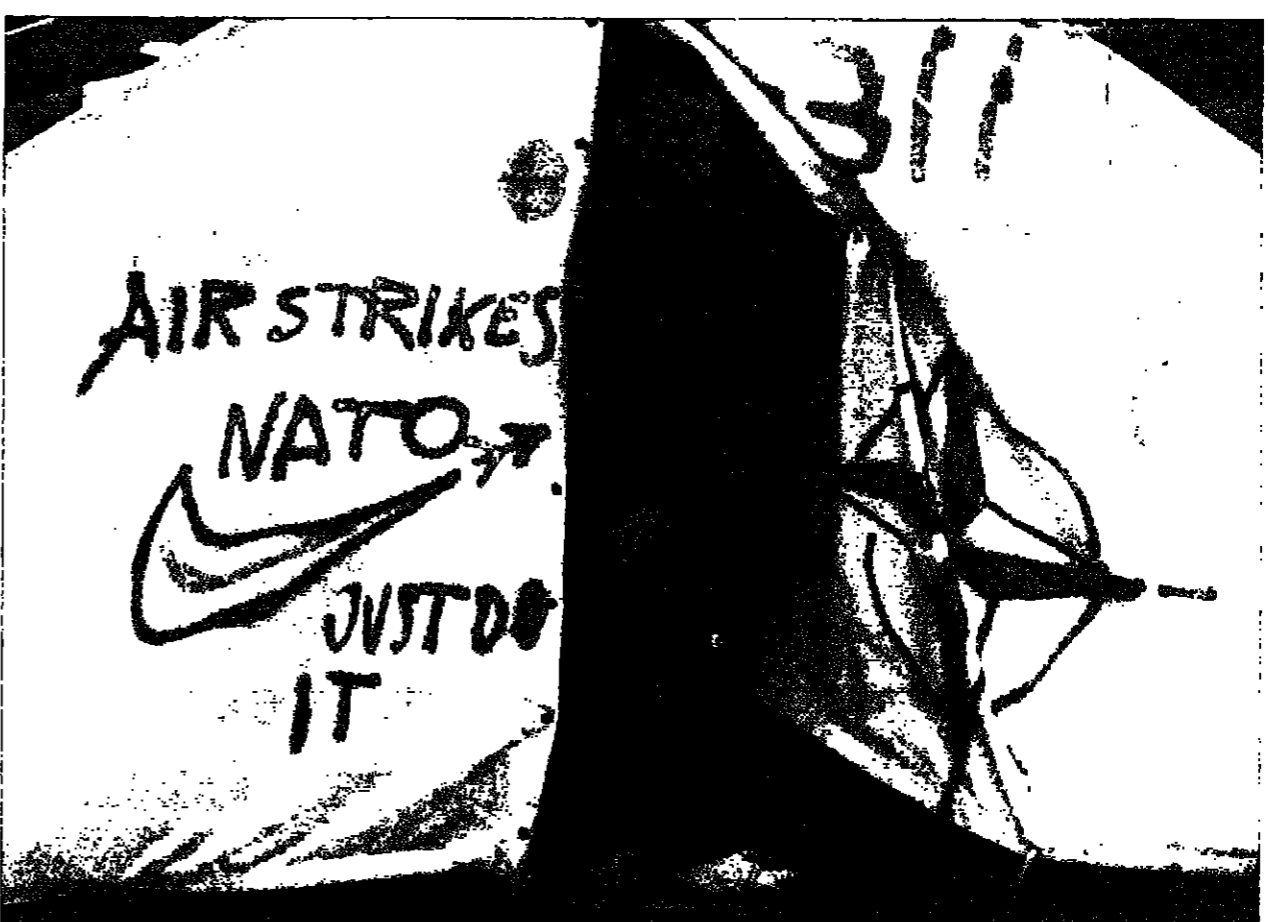
King receives Israeli centrist party candidate Mordechai

By Amy Henderson with Agencies

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday received the leader of Israel's newly-formed centrist party, a gesture which political pundits in Jordan and Israel have interpreted as Jordan's encouragement of a more moderate leadership in Israel ahead of the Jewish state's May 17 elections. Officials have kept the nature of discussions between King Abdullah and former Likud Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai more or less under wraps, insisting that the visit was private, but foreign agencies reported that the two met for a working lunch and discussed issues related to the peace process. Jordanian officials have insisted that the Kingdom will stay out of the Israeli elections fray, but off the record, some have suggested that, for practical reasons, their fingers are crossed for an Israeli govern-

ment that falls somewhere between Labour and Likud ideologies. "The most practical thing, if we look at the issues before us, is some kind of national unity government," one senior official told the Jordan Times recently, referring to impending final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians. "When it comes to land, [Israelis] are talking about... a Jewish issue. [Israelis] are arguing about 'Jewish land,' as far as they are concerned, which means that a national consensus [in Israel] is a must before the peace process can move forward. It's not a question of names any more. For the Arabs, it's a matter of who can deliver."

Jordan has made no secret of its frustration with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud government for failing to move the peace process forward, both through its refusal to implement the Wye River agreement, brokered by the late King Hussein, and its reluctance to facilitate Jordanian trade with the West Bank. King Abdullah has indicated that Amman's priorities have been refocused on inter-Arab ties, rather than on rallying behind an intransigent western neighbour. However, he maintains that the historic 1994 treaty with the Jewish state, signed by his father, is secure. Netanyahu made a much-publicised visit to Jordan in March in his capacity as prime minister, but until now, no other candidate, except Mordechai, who left the Likud earlier this year to join Israel's new centrist party, has visited the Kingdom ahead of the elections. Agencies quoted Jordanian officials as saying that the invitation does not signal a show of support for or against any candidate in Israel's elections. But to many, the visit is reminiscent of 1996, when His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, then crown prince, received Netanyahu, then a contender for the premiership. Netanyahu won by a narrow margin over Shimon Peres, and Labour Party leaders were later to claim that the meeting influenced the Israeli vote. On Saturday, Reuters quoted Netanyahu's advisor David Bar-Ilan as saying that he could not comment on the visit, which, he said, "had implications on the elections."



Ethnic Albanian refugee Astrit Selmani, 17, on Sunday emerges from his tent displaying spray painted slogans in support of NATO bombing of Yugoslavia inside the Stenkovec refugee camp near Skopje, Macedonia (AP photo)

Yugoslavia issues appeal to U.N. over NATO 'aggression'

Yeltsin, Clinton discuss crisis; Russia warns against ground war

Agencies — NATO also said it planned to "visit and search" ships bound for Yugoslavia. Stopping Russian tankers from delivering oil could antagonise Moscow at a time when NATO leaders want Russia to help mediate a settlement with Belgrade and contribute to a force to protect ethnic Albanians if and when they return home. Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton held a "lengthy" discussion Sunday on the Kosovo crisis, a top U.S. official said. "I believe President Yeltsin and the Russians are very serious about trying to find a peaceful solution," national security adviser Sandy Berger said on CNN's "Late Edition." Clinton encouraged Yeltsin to continue the Russian search for peace, Berger said. "I believe there will be continued contact over the days ahead," he added. In Moscow, Interfax news agency reported earlier Sunday that Yeltsin initiated a 90-minute phone call to Clinton after conferring with Russian peace envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin. It was the third exchange between the leaders on Kosovo since NATO began its air offensive on Yugoslavia on March 24. Chernomyrdin travelled to Belgrade Thursday for talks with Milosevic that the envoy said yielded an accord on the deployment of a military force to Kosovo. Yugoslav authorities, however, denied that they had agreed to such an intervention, stating that only an observer force would be allowed. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov warned during an interview televised in Russia on Sunday that Russia may reconsider its relations with NATO if the alliance launches a ground offensive in Yugoslavia. "I think we should revise several aspects of our relations with NATO, and, on the economic front, we may need to bring certain adjustments to our spending," Primakov said on Russian TV. When the interviewer asked whether those "adjustments" meant an increase in defence spending, Primakov said: "At any rate, more attention [should be focused] on defence, but not necessarily in spending." Asked about his relations with Albright, Primakov denied feeling "wronged," despite strained relations between the two countries, who disagree vehemently on the air strikes against Serbia. "We can agree or not agree," Primakov said.

India near elections as Congress fails to form government

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India on Sunday stood on the verge of its third general elections in three years when opposition leader Sonia Gandhi threw in the towel on her bid to form a new government. After meeting Gandhi, President K.R. Narayanan called in outgoing Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who later told reporters he would convene a meeting of his cabinet on Monday. The situation would appear to leave Narayanan with little choice but to call an election, especially as Gandhi stressed that Congress would not support a coalition of other opposition parties. The United News of India reported that Election Commission M.S. Gill, currently on a visit to the United States, had been summoned back to New Delhi. Asked if the president had ordered the preparation of a resolution to dissolve parliament, Vajpayee said: "I cannot say anything today." Gandhi showed the president a list of 239 MPs willing to support a minority Congress administration to replace the Hindu nationalist-led coalition, which was voted out of office more than one week ago. It was just six more than the figure she gave to the president on Friday, and still well-short of the 272 necessary for a simple majority in the lower house. "I tried my best to convince my colleagues and friends in secular parties but I have not been able to convince them," Gandhi said, hitting out at allies who withheld their backing. "Some parties have put their personal interests before the interests of the nation," she said. "You know who they are better than I do." Asked whether fresh elections were now inevitable, the Italian-born Congress president said the decision lay with Narayanan. "Whatever the president decides, we will abide by," she said. "We have been working all along as a responsible opposition and we will continue to do this." The current political crisis was triggered by the collapse on April 17 of Vajpayee's 13-month-old coalition, after losing a parliamentary motion of confidence by a single vote. (Continued on page 2)



An Israeli police officer attaches a closure notice to the door of the Arab east Jerusalem Palestinian-run prisoners' club on Sunday (AP photo)

Israel steps up action against Palestinian offices in Jerusalem

Agencies — IN A new Israeli crackdown on Palestinian institutions in Arab east Jerusalem, police on Sunday closed the Palestinian prisoners' club for alleged links with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). "The Palestinians opened the club in contradiction of an agreement reached two weeks ago," Israeli police spokeswoman Linda Menuchin told AFP. In a court hearing two weeks ago, Israel agreed not to close the club if the Palestinians refrain from carrying out activities on its premises. The club works mainly for the welfare of the families of Palestinians detained by Israel. When activity in the prisoner's club resumed on Sunday, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani ordered the premises closed. Menuchin said. Policemen drilled bolts into the main entrance to the club and changed the locks. Israel charges that the prisoners' club is an official institution of the PNA and operates in Arab east Jerusalem in violation of Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. The Palestinians working in the prisoners' club say they have no official links with the PNA. At the end of March, Prime Minister Netanyahu ordered the closure of the prisoners' club and two other offices allegedly linked to the PNA. On Thursday, Netanyahu also ordered the closure of unspecified offices within Orient House, the unofficial headquarters of the PLO in east Jerusalem, charging that they are operated by the PNA. The prime minister instructed Kahalani to put together a plan for the closure. (Continued on page 2)

NATO vows to protect frontline states in Kosovo conflict

WASHINGTON (R) — NATO leaders pledged on Sunday to protect the seven nations bordering Yugoslavia should Serb forces attack them for their support of the allied air war over Kosovo. The vow of solidarity was given in a meeting between NATO leaders and leaders of Yugoslavia border states to map a strategy for the political and economic reconstruction of the Balkans once the Kosovo war is over. It came on the third and final day of a 50th anniversary NATO summit overshadowed by the war in Yugoslavia, where NATO again bombed targets across that country, halting television broadcasts and hitting a barracks and chemical plant. "The nations of the region have risked and even faced armed confrontation with Serbia by facilitating and supporting our campaign to end the bloodshed in Kosovo," U.S. President Bill Clinton told the gathering in the ornate, flag-draped Mellon Auditorium, where the treaty establishing NATO was signed in 1949. He said NATO had made its position clear: "If Belgrade challenges its neighbours as a result of the presence of NATO, we will respond." In the meeting, each leader of the non-NATO border states — Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia — spoke in favour of a NATO victory over Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's Serb forces in Kosovo. "We heard seven speeches today but only one message: they share our determination to prevail and to see this through, and they are willing to put up with the short-term inconveniences resulting from the Kosovo crisis," said NATO spokesman Jamie Shea. Each border state has been drawn into the crisis in one way or another. Albania and Macedonia are bearing the brunt of the massive refugee crisis triggered by Serbia's bloody crackdown on ethnic Albanians. Thousands of NATO troops are deployed in Albania and Macedonia and Bosnia, and Shea said Macedonia had agreed to permit the alliance to station additional British and German troops on its territory. In addition, Romania and Slovenia have granted NATO the use of air space for alliance military operations against Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria is expected to soon vote to give similar permission, Shea told reporters. Hungary, the only NATO country bordering Yugoslavia, is letting NATO planes use its three military airfields. Croatia and Bulgaria have imposed sanctions on Yugoslavia. "Milosevic is all alone," said Shea. "He is a pariah in his own backyard. His neighbours are moving away from him. They want to turn their backs on the past and look to the future." British Prime Minister Tony Blair came close to calling Milosevic a war criminal, telling NBC's "Meet the Press" that, "I can't really believe that he is ignorant of what people are doing under his control." Reconstruction has become urgent for Yugoslavia's neighbours, who, sometimes reluctantly, have backed NATO during its month-long air war or absorbed potentially destabilising refugee flows from Kosovo. "We meet at a time of crisis in Kosovo, and no one knows better the full impact of the crisis than those who live in the immediate neighbourhood," said NATO Secretary General Javier Solana. Clinton said NATO allies were committed to working with the countries and with multilateral financial institutions to ease emergency needs and help with debts. U.S. officials said no detailed plan for aid is likely to emerge from the meeting. Alliance military officials also were trying to hammer out a plan for intercepting oil bound for Yugoslavia at the risk of angering Belgrade's top oil supplier, Russia. It was unclear if they would complete it by the time the summit ended. France has expressed reservations about the legality of using force to stop a ship on the high seas, but a U.S. official said he believed that after consultations France was now supportive of the so-called "visit and search" regime. In response to Russian protests of the plan, Shea said: "We expect Russia to exercise the restraint it has exercised so far." NATO members have made clear they intend to undertake a rebuilding programme for Kosovo, which has been devastated by allied bombs and pillaging by Serb troops. Macedonia and Albania would also be likely beneficiaries. Germany has called for a project on the scale of the Marshall Plan that helped rebuild Europe after World War II and suggested European Union membership should eventually be offered to Balkan countries. Some European countries also have called for debt relief for the region. The cost of rebuilding the region is certain to run into billions of dollars. NATO leaders also met some 23 leaders of former Soviet bloc countries and neutral European countries under the alliance's Partnership for Peace programme. Russia, which opposes the NATO air war, was conspicuous by its absence, as was hardline Belarus.

Court upholds sentence for friend of Rabin's killer

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli court upheld on Sunday a nine-month jail sentence against a student friend of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's murderer for failing to prevent the 1995 assassination.

A three-judge panel at Tel Aviv district court rejected an appeal by Margalit Har-Shefi, 23, against her conviction in September for knowing about the planned murder by right-wing extremist Yigal Amir and failing to prevent it.

Two judges concurred with the lower court verdict while the third believed she should be acquitted because of a lack of evidence.

After the hearing, Har-Shefi, who comes from the West Bank settlement of Beit Al, said

that she did not take seriously Amir's words about planning to kill Rabin.

"Had I thought that this man attributed an intention and meaning to his words, I would have done everything within my power to save the life of the prime minister. That is the truth," Har-Shefi told Israeli Radio.

"I am disappointed that I did not manage to prove my innocence. I am comforting myself with the fact that there is an 80-page minority opinion in my favour," she added, reading from a prepared statement.

Har-Shefi, who was a law student with Amir at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan university, plans to appeal again to the supreme court, her lawyer Yaa-

cov Wiener said. She remains free pending the appeal.

Prosecutors had called for Har-Shefi to serve the maximum two-year sentence for failing to prevent a crime and many left-wing activists criticised the nine-month term as too lenient.

Amir shot Rabin three times in Tel Aviv on November 4, 1995 in a bid to halt the Israeli government's policy of transferring West Bank land to the Palestinians. He was jailed for life in 1996.

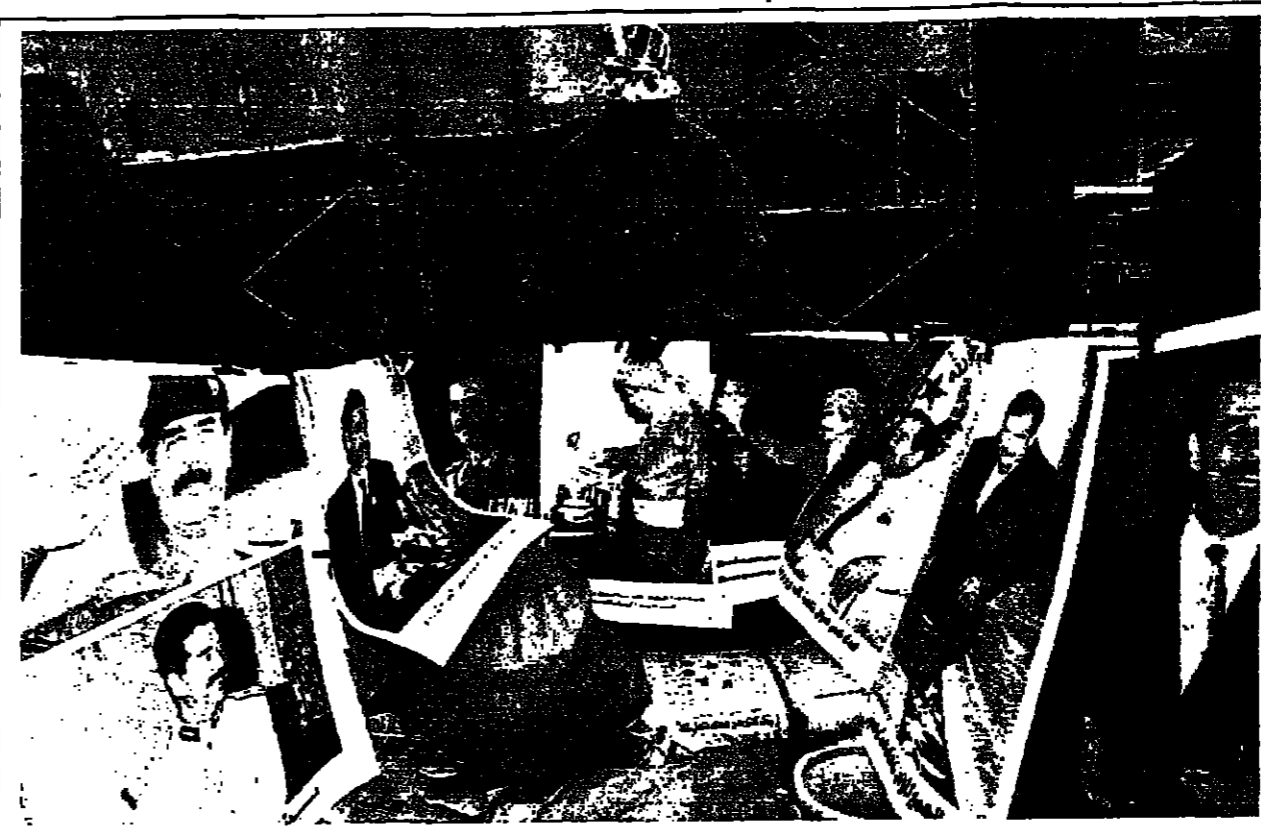
In another development on Sunday, a former Israeli secret service informer and right-wing Jewish extremist was charged with the same offence as Har-Shefi for failing to

inform his superiors about Amir's plans.

Avisshal Raviv, code-named "Champagne," was secretly paid by the internal security Shin Beth, Israel's internal security service, to inform on his militant associates.

According to the indictment presented to Jerusalem district court, Raviv was told by Amir of an earlier plan to kill Rabin in 1995. However, he is not suspected of involvement in the murder itself.

Raviv, who is also accused of belonging to a "terrorist organisation" over his creation of an extreme right-wing group known as Eyal, has rejected the charges.



SADDAM'S BIRTHDAY: An Iraqi street vendor sells pictures of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on Sunday. Iraq is gearing up for celebrations to mark their president's 62nd birthday on Wednesday (AFP photo)

Israel's Peace Now meets PLO official in Orient House

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A delegation from Israel's Peace Now movement met on Saturday with top PLO representative Faisal Hussein in Orient House, the unofficial Palestinian headquarters ordered closed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A spokesman for the group told reporters after the meeting that the closure order was a "dangerous provocation" intended to boost the embattled premier's re-election hopes. He said a larger Peace Now delegation would go to Orient House on Monday.

Netanyahu ordered the closure after a meeting at Orient House on

Wednesday between Hussein and Arab diplomats that he claimed violated agreements barring Palestinian National Authority activity in Jerusalem.

"We are not ready to have Orient House, situated in the capital of the state of Israel, serve as the Palestinian foreign ministry," he said on Thursday.

Following the order, several European diplomats including representatives from Belgium, Britain and the Netherlands, also met Hussein at Orient House.

The centre, technically a private residence, has been used as a base of operations for local Palestinian leaders in

Jerusalem since before the 1993 Oslo peace accords which created the PNA.

It includes offices for welfare organisations serving Arab east Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, Palestinian advisors for international aid organisations and various research groups.

Israeli security sources have warned that any attempt to close Orient House down completely could spark violence.

Netanyahu, who is lagging in opinion polls behind his main rival for the premiership, Labour Party chief Ehud Barak, has tried to make an alleged Palestinian threat to Israeli control over Jerusalem a central

theme of his reelection campaign.

Under the Oslo accords, the PNA is authorised to operate only in agreed parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The political status of Arab east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967 and later annexed as part of its capital, was to be resolved in future negotiations.

Israel insists that Arab east Jerusalem is part of its undivided eternal capital — a declaration not recognised by the international community, while the Palestinians hope to make the sector the capital of a state of their own.

Yugoslavia issues appeal to U.N. over NATO 'aggression'

(Continued from page 1)

"The Security Council must take concrete measures to end the aggression, as a contribution to creating the conditions for bringing back peace and stability to the region and resolving the problem by political means," Jovanovic wrote.

In his letter, read out on Belgrade-based BK television, Jovanovic accused NATO of choosing mainly civilian targets that had produced a flood of refugees.

Jovanovic rejected any deployment of foreign, armed troops on his territory to enforce any peace settlement and said in an interview with the Washington Post the Vietnam war "would be nothing" compared with the kind of war the United States would risk by invading Yugoslavia.

In Washington, NATO leaders have vowed to step up military and economic pressure on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, demanding a withdrawal of his forces from Kosovo, the return of 600,000 refugees and deployment of a NATO-led force in the province to protect them.

Clinton said NATO was not drifting into a Vietnam-style conflict but added that it would not end swiftly like the 1991 Gulf War.

"I think the important thing for everyone to understand is that in order for this strategy to succeed, we need two things — one: vigorous execution and two: patience," Clinton said.

Splits over the oil blockade emerged in the summit of the 19-nation bloc. French President Jacques Chirac said

France had raised legal reservations because stopping a ship on the high seas would be an act of war.

Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini said "a blockade is preferable to destruction... of terminals in the port of Bar" or of bridges and other facilities in Montenegro, Serbia's outlet to the sea.

In a sign of rising tension in Montenegro, formally a partner with Serbia in the Yugoslav federation, the country's most prominent media figure said he was going into hiding to escape capture and possible torture at the hands of the Yugoslav army.

On Friday, the army issued an arrest warrant for Miodrag Perovic, founder of Montenegro's Antenna M radio station and the weekly magazine Monitor in a sharp intensification of the military's battle against local news organisations.

The army, which takes its orders from Belgrade, has also issued a summons for Nebojsa Redzic, editor-in-chief of another independent local radio station, Radio Free Montenegro.

In Tirana, witnesses reported the arrival of a second wave of U.S. Apache attack helicopters. The Apaches are part of a squadron of 24 Washington is sending to Albania.

NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said on Sunday Macedonia had agreed to allow NATO to station more British and German troops on its territory, while Romania and Slovenia had granted NATO the use of their air space. Bulgaria was expected to give similar permission soon.

'Cairo must expel Sudanese opposition'

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan President Omar Al Bashir accused Egypt of catering to the Sudanese opposition and said they must be expelled from Egyptian soil before relations with Cairo can be normalised.

"Sudan maintains an open-hearted attitude of goodwill towards Egypt, but Egypt has not responded in kind and has not resolved the question of its relations with Sudan," Bashir said on state television on Saturday.

"We expelled the Egyptian opposition some time ago and there is no Egyptian opposition in Sudan.

But the Sudanese opposition in Egypt enjoys political and material support and receives full care," he said.

"Egypt's hosting of the Sudanese opposition... will remain an obstacle for normalisation of relations between the two countries," Bashir said.

Sudan and Egypt both claim the Halaib territory which skirts the Red Sea.

Sudanese opposition parties have offices in Egypt, and many leaders have moved permanently to Cairo since the 1989 coup that brought Bashir's Islamist government to power.

India near elections as Congress fails to form government

(Continued from page 1)

Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP — still the largest in parliament with 182 seats — had urged Narayanan to consider calling it back to power if the opposition failed to provide an alternative.

However, Vajpayee gave no indication following his meeting with the president on Sunday that any such invitation had been extended.

Instead he focused on the divisions within the opposition that had blocked their attempts to form a new government.

"They had said an alternative government could be formed within five minutes and even one minute. Till today there has been no sign of

that," Vajpayee said. "Congress admitted its defeat to the president and so did the Communists."

The bid for power by Congress — the second largest party with 140 seats — foundered on the refusal of key opposition groups to prop up a minority Congress government from the outside.

Instead they proposed a Communist-led "third front" coalition with Congress backing from the outside. But that was rejected on Sunday by India's main left-wing party — the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) — and Congress itself.

Following a politburo meeting, CPI-M Secretary General Harkishan Singh Surjeet said

the only remaining option was a compromise in which Congress would agree to a coalition with other opposition parties. But Gandhi ruled out that possibility after his audience with Narayanan. "We are not ready to bargain. We are not going to support a third or fourth front," she said.

Elections in India, with its 600 million-strong electorate, are a logistical nightmare. Recent experience shows the results are hardly worth the effort.

No single party has won an overall majority since 1984. The last two polls in 1996 and 1998 produced disastrously fragmented parliaments which failed miserably to provide a stable government.

Israel steps up action against Palestinian offices in Jerusalem

(Continued from page 1)

On Sunday, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem warned of violence if Netanyahu carries out his threat to close parts of Orient House.

"Unrest is likely coming," Faisal Hussein told reporters at Orient House. "The Netanyahu government is making a big mistake by creating such a situation, by raising now such an issue," he said.

"It is only wisdom that can solve this problem. We hope that there will be enough wisdom [on the Israeli side] to find a solution," he said.

Hussein renewed Palestinian charges that Netanyahu was trying to win right-wing support ahead of general elections on May 17.

Meanwhile, the Arab League on Sunday urged Britain and France to press Israel to reverse a decision to shut Orient House.

"We asked them to intervene urgently to put pressure on Israel to reverse its decision to close the Palestinian National Authority offices in Orient House," league assistant secretary general, Said Kamal, told reporters.

Similar requests will be sent to other European

leaders, Kamal said.

On Friday, Kamal described the Israeli measure as "provocative" and a "dangerous" electoral ploy threatening to destabilise the region.

Israel considers Arab east Jerusalem, which it occupied in June 1967, to be an integral part of its territory and tries to prevent any official Palestinian activity there.

The international community has never recognised Israel's annexation of Arab east Jerusalem which the Palestinians want to make the capital of a future state.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Children's Programme — Lucky Luke
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News headlines
19:33 French Programme
20:00 The Internet Cafe
20:30 French Programme
21:30 Encounter
22:00 News in English
22:30 FX

PRAYER TIMES

03:27 Fajr
04:51 (Sunrise) Duha
11:33 Dhuhur
15:12 Asr
18:16 Maghrib
19:40 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh. Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly becoming around average. It will be relatively warm with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be

northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp.
Amman 14/27
Aqaba 17/31
Deserts 13/30
Jordan Valley 17/32

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 29 Aqaba 31 Humidity readings: Amman 24 per cent. Aqaba 35 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 13/25
Jerash 16/30
Um Qays 15/30
Madaba 14/27
Petra 15/29
Dead Sea 18/34

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Naser 4751404
Dr. Sa'Id Tawfiq 4788285
Dr. Nidal As'ad 4751672
Dr. Issam Asmar 4890504
AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadani Pharmacy 5537004
Ruksa Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Mahmoud Abul Hajja (02) 245209
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02) 275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Nabil Saffarini (05) 901322
Palestine Pharmacy (05) 983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdall Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53300
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Mulhajreen 4771101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607153
Al-Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital 4387181
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (05) 983323

Zarqa National Hospital (05) 900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (05) 986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (05) 990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02) 275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02) 272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Speciality Hospital (02) 7103100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5
ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:30 Sanaa (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:20 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:25 Beirut (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
16:05 Cairo (RJ)
16:30 London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:50 Kuwait (RJ)
18:40 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
23:15 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
03:15 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
10:40 Khartoum (SD)
13:10 Bahrain (GF)
13:10 Milan (AZ)
14:00 Vienna (OS)
14:15 Doha (QR)
15:25 Doha, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:05 Tel Aviv (LY)
17:20 Istanbul (SD)
17:35 Beirut (ME)
17:50 Frankfurt (LH)
21:30 Cairo (MS)
00:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:25 Athens, Beirut (DA)
Royal Wings (RW)
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:35 Beirut (RJ)
10:45 Kuwait (RJ)
11:05 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:20 Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:15 Cairo (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
20:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Tehran (RJ)
21:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
21:05 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
Other Flights
10:30 Cairo (MS)
11:40 Istanbul (SD)
14:00 Bahrain (GF)
14:00 Milan (AZ)
14:50 Vienna (OS)
15:15 Doha (QR)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
18:20 Khartoum (SD)
18:35 Beirut (ME)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:45 Beirut, Athens (OA)
05:55 Damascus, London (BA)
06:10 Frankfurt (LH)
Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)



HRH Crown Prince Hamzah looks on as Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid explains one of GAM's projects on a to-scale model (Petra photo)

Crown Prince Hamzah visits GAM

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah on Sunday visited the Greater Amman Municipality and was briefed by Mayor Nidal Hadid and other senior assistants on development projects within the capital.

According to Hadid, major projects the municipality is currently involved in implementing include the Jordan Street being built within the Hashemi Shamali region, the Nashaa tunnel in eastern Amman and a number of public gardens.

The Crown Prince listened to a briefing about the

municipality's plans to protect the environment, sanitation schemes, the new solid waste site near Amman, the capital's new slaughter house and a plant for recycling plastics.

Prince Hamzah also inspected the municipality's ongoing work on Al Hussein Cultural Centre and later made a tour of the municipality's various sections and expressed appreciation of the municipal council's efforts to improve services for the capital's residents.

Hadid also briefed the Crown Prince on the municipality's preparations

to celebrate the Kingdom's Independence Day on May 25.

Hadid said that the Amman Municipality was ready to offer assistance to other municipalities for their own celebration preparations, which will include firework displays and decorations.

Hadid spoke before Minister of Interior Nayef Al Qadi and representatives of the ministries of education and youth as well as the Jordan Armed Forces, the Public Security Department and Civil Defence Department.

Applied Science students stage peaceful sit-in on university campus

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Students at the Applied Science University on Sunday staged a peaceful sit-in inside the campus to protest what they described as the administration's refusal to implement their demands of more freedom and educational services.

A representative of the students council, which organised the protest, told more than 300 students who attended the rally that the move was the beginning of a series of actions aimed at forcing the administration to agree to their demands.

A statement of the student council, distributed among students at the rally and entitled the "suffocation of students' will," accused the administration of barring student activities in the university.

"We request the administration deal seriously with our demands," said the one-page statement "the administration is trying to confine the student council, curb its freedom and abolish its existence," the statement added.

A copy of the statement was sent to His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Talal, president of the Higher Education Council, the

Lower House of Parliament and the Prime Minister's office.

Deputy chairman of the students council, Tareq Rababa'a, told participants that among the demands the administration has not responded to are the demand to hold a rally inside the campus, the demand to appoint a doctor to treat female students, and the demand that a health insurance policy for the university students be introduced.

Rababa'a indicated that the student council might call for a general strike at the university if their demands are not met. He did not give a date for such an action.

"The sit-in is the first step in our campaign which will be intensified in the coming few days if the administration continues to ignore our demands," the student told his colleagues.

The council, controlled by students who sympathise with the Islamic movement, has repeatedly argued with the university's administration.

The administration has taken several actions against student spearheading the students activities in this university in the past two years.

Water minister to travel to Syria

Water talks to focus on Wihdeh Dam

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Minister of Water and Irrigation Kamel Mahadin will leave for Syria on Saturday to discuss joint water issues, including the construction of the long-awaited Wihdeh Dam on the Yarmouk River.

Mahadin, who is currently in France "examining his experience in water projects," will review the dam's tender documents and feasibility study.

The dam, whose cost initially was estimated at JD283 million, then revised to JD152 million, is expected to have a storage capacity of 225 million cubic metres (mcm) of water and would help Jordan store additional water supplies from the Yarmouk River, which normally provides the Kingdom with 135 mcm annually.

The Yarmouk River, which begins in Syria, flows along the two countries' border and then joins the Jordan River downstream from Lake Tiberias. It reached its lowest level in recent history last week, according to the government.

Information Minister Nasser Lawzi told reporters after Saturday's Cabinet session that Mahadin's trip aims to discuss means to provide the Kingdom with water from Syria after President Hafez Assad directed his government to share supplies with Jordan.

Lawzi expressed optimism that water talks with Syria will result in providing Jordan with supplies to meet water shortage this summer. The deficit in domestic

water use is projected to reach around 10 per cent by the end of this year, since rainfall, which accounts 60 per cent of the Kingdom's annual water supply, dipped to just two per cent of the seasonal average in January, when Jordan officially declared a state of drought.

The government devised a three-scenario contingency plan to handle the water crisis, focusing on the Zai Water Treatment Plant, and on the Amman and Balqa governorates, where the shortage is expected to be severe.

Lawzi said Jordan and Syria have agreed in principle that a joint committee will meet in June to discuss related issues.

Last year, in a joint committee meeting, Jordan and Syria agreed to proceed with the dam and set up an early warning system to monitor the quality of Yarmouk River water flowing into the Kingdom.

The Syrians, who then said they had plans to provide Amman with a weekly report on the quality of river water entering the Kingdom,

agreed to set up several water stations to monitor the river's water before it reaches Jordan. Water experts complained in recent months about receiving low-quality water from the Yarmouk River because of wastewater that was leaking into the river's tributaries in Syria.

The Kingdom has plans to construct a JD50 million wastewater treatment plant near the border.

Damascus has so far made no official comment on the Jordanian complaints, but

Jordanian officials have said that Syria acknowledges the problem and that financial considerations do not allow the country to effectively control water quality.

The dam, part of an agreement signed in 1987, has been delayed by lack of funds, political tension between the two countries over their regional roles and Israeli reservations over the dam pending a regional peace settlement. The two sides said they are looking for means to secure funding for the project, whose construction is expected to take three and half years.

Syria also agreed to Jordanian demands to allow it to secure its full share of water coming from the river, estimated at 220 mcm, in line with an agreement reached in 1987 that was based on an Arab League agreement reached in 1955.

The water deal, devised by a special Arab League committee, set Jordan's annual share at 330 mcm and Syria's at 90 mcm. Syria currently gets 220 mcm a year.

However, Jordanian officials said their country was only getting up to 135 mcm a year from the 1955 share.

Jordan won a Syrian pledge not to build new ditches along the Yarmouk River that would obstruct the flow of water to the Kingdom.

Syria has built 25 ditches inside its territory to store riverwater, a move Jordanian officials claim has helped reduce the flow of the river from 470 million cubic metres a year to 270 mcm near the Adassiyeh border area.

The JPA and Al Arab Al Yawm: At it again

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Al Arab Al Yawm newspaper's board of directors and the Jordanian Press Association (JPA) are back at each other's throats over the crisis that commenced earlier this month when the daily fired 17 employees.

The JPA council had blasted the paper for firing the employees and said its arguments as presented by the paper's general manager, Adnan Hussein — who said the dismissals were necessary for "internal restructuring," and fell within an article of the Labour Law — were unconvincing.

It called for an open-ended sit-in in front of 1 Al Arab Al Yawm's building on University Street.

"We went to the Amman mayor and complained, and the director of the police was also notified of the situation," said Mansour adding that the mayor had asked Hroub and family members to back off but they did not budge.

"We stopped the prime minister who was passing by and asked him to intervene in the case," said Mousa Hawamdeh, father of four and one of the sacked 17.

ended.

According to JPA council member Nidal Mansour, he and other colleagues went to the tent site Sunday morning to find it gone, with cars belonging to the newspaper board members and employees parked in its place.

"After inquiring about the issue we found out that they (Al Arab Al Yawm board members) had called the owner of the tent saying the sit-in ended and asked him to take it down and tore the banners down from in front of it," he said.

In return the JPA council decided to set the tent back up, but were unable to because of the presence of cars parked at the site and the "uncordial" attitude of the owners of the vehicles.

"We went to the Amman mayor and complained, and the director of the police was also notified of the situation," said Mansour adding that the mayor had asked Hroub and family members to back off but they did not budge.

"We stopped the prime minister who was passing by and asked him to intervene in the case," said Mousa Hawamdeh, father of four and one of the sacked 17.

He said that Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh had ordered that the JPA council be permitted to set up the tent again.

"Your rights are protected within the law and the tent must be set up again," Hawamdeh quoted Rawabdeh as saying.

According to Mansour, another tent was brought and had "assumed position" in front of Al Arab Al Yawm by 4:30 pm.

"Many of our fellow journalists don't want to leave the tent, because they are afraid another attempt to bring it down," he added, saying the JPA council are still debating filing a lawsuit.

Mansour added that further measures, including calling for a strike, could be taken.

Hawamdeh described the situation of those sacked as "the grass that gets crushed under the feet of elephants fighting for power [within the herd]," saying the true victims are those sacked and that their livelihoods are at stake.

"A solution to the problem has to be found soon," he added.

Jordan to host meeting of UNWRA donor countries

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan on Wednesday will host the unofficial annual meeting of representatives of donor countries and those hosting Palestinian refugees issues.

The two-day meeting, to be held at the Radisson SAS Hotel under the patronage of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, will discuss the United Nations Relief Works Agency's financial situation, budget and services provided to Palestinian refugees.

UNWRA has allocated an additional \$40 million in in-kind assistance to this year's estimated \$322 million budget, which suffers from a \$60 million deficit.

At the meeting, which comes ahead of the U.N. General Assembly that must approve the UNWRA budget and cover its deficit, participants will review UNWRA's achievements, and examine its vision to establish social and economic projects to serve refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Delegates will also

review the agency's efforts to develop its administration.

Jordan spends \$350 million from its budget on direct and indirect assistance to refugees in educational, health, social and infrastructure fields.

Representatives of countries hosting Palestinian refugees will hold a preparatory meeting on Tuesday at the Palestinian Affairs Department to discuss the refugees' situations and economic obstacles facing them.

Out of 1.5 million refugees registered in Jordan, 18 per cent live in camps, according to UNWRA.

During the meeting, UNWRA employees are expected to submit a memo, requesting donor countries to reconsider wages and appointments.

Sources told Petra that UNWRA's employees committee, which groups 22,000 workers, might escalate measures in case the meeting does not consider their demands.

PM briefs House on King's recent tour of Arab states

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh on Sunday met with Lower House members to brief them on His Majesty King Abdullah's recent tour of some Arab states, an MP said.

Deputy Salamah Hiyari said the premier informed the chamber that the visit to the Gulf states aimed to strengthen ties with these states and to explain Jordan's economic plight.

"The premier indicated that the tour aimed to boost relations with these states and discuss with them how they could assist Jordan to ease its economic crisis," the MP told the Jordan Times.

Among these options were the employment of more Jordanians in the Gulf, initiating joint ventures in Jordan and depositing some foreign currency at the Central Bank of Jordan to enhance its foreign reserves, Hiyari added.

The deputy quoted Rawabdeh as saying that among the projects that might interest businessmen in the Gulf was the purchase of "some shares of the Jordan Telecommunications Company, especially by UAE businessmen who had

good experience in this sector in their country."

Talks with Gulf officials also focused on enhancing Jordanian exports to these states, especially agricultural exports.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted the premier as saying that the tour stems from "His Majesty's belief in boosting inter-Arab ties."

During his visit to Syria, with whom ties soured following Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, the Jordanian delegation reviewed the 1975 trade protocol and proposed the amendment of the 24-year-old protocol, Rawabdeh told the agency.

The premier indicated that talks with the Syrians also centred on the construction of a \$225 million Al Wihdeh Dam on the Yarmouk River to ease Jordan's water shortage problem.

"The Syrians have expressed their readiness to lobby [along with Jordan] for financing the project especially at the Arab economic agencies," the premier told the agency.

He noted that Jordanian Water Minister Kamel Mahadin and his Syrian counterpart will meet next week to

finalise studies of the project, which will generate electric power to Syria.

Rawabdeh noted that Syria also expressed its willingness to help Jordan in overcoming the expected water shortage next summer by allowing the Kingdom to use a Syrian dam in the southern city of Dera'a, which could make available an additional 8.5 million cubic metres of water to the Kingdom.

The prime minister said that a Jordanian technical team will visit Syria to discuss the "means to transfer water from the Syrian dam to the Kingdom."

Deputy Hiyari said Rawabdeh told legislators that Syrian officials have expressed willingness to discuss the issue of Jordanian prisoners and detainees in Syrian jails.

"The premier told us Syria is ready to release some prisoners and that the matter could be discussed by bilateral committees to reach a breakthrough on this issue," the deputy said.

While government figures showed that Jordanian prisoners in Syria are estimated at almost 300, a Jordanian non-governmental committee put the figure at as many as 700.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King meets Kaabneh

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday paid a visit to the Armed Forces headquarters. He was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh and other senior officers. King Abdullah reviewed with Kaabneh issues concerning the Armed Forces.

King condoles Hweitat tribe

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday paid a visit to Ma'an governorate where he offered his condolences to Hweitat tribe over the death of Sattam Faisal Jazi. The family thanked the King for his visit. Meanwhile, HRH Prince Hassan on Sunday also offered condolences over the death of Jazi. The family expressed appreciation for Prince Hassan's gesture.

Jordan remembers Queen Zein

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanians on Monday will remember the late Queen Zein, the mother of the late King Hussein, who was laid to rest five years ago.

Public holiday announced

AMMAN (Petra) — All ministries and public department will be closed on Saturday, May 1, in observance of Labour Day, according to a communique issued on Saturday by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh.

Kuwaiti justice minister arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — Kuwaiti Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ahmad Khaled Al Kulaib arrived in Amman on Sunday for a three-day visit, in which he will deliver a written message to His Majesty King Abdullah from Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah. During his trip, Al Kulaib will participate in the 9th Zakat seminar on Monday.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Lectures

• "Al Koura District" by Ahmad Shreideh at the Friends of Archaeology Centre on Tuesday April 27 at 6:30 p.m. (Telefax 5930682).
• "13th Century Lessons for Muslim-Christian Dialogue" by Dr. L. Michael Spach at the Fulbright House, Shreideh on Tuesday April 27 (4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.) (Tel. 4618053).

Films

• French film "Vivement Dimanche" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
• "Sense and Sensibility" at the British Council, Jabel Amman on Tuesday April 27 at 6:00 p.m. (Children's film "The Page Master" will also be screened on Wednesday April 28 at 5:00 p.m.)
• "The Jacket" at Books@Cafe, Jabel Amman on Tuesday April 27 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 46504578).

DOCUMENTARY ON POVERTY

• "Poverty: The Human Dimension" — Radio Jordan's documentary at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (The programme, broadcast every Monday at these times, attempts to shed light on the different dimensions of poverty in Jordan.)

Lebanese Film

• Three films: "Children of Shatila," "The Kidnapped," and "Muscles" at Abdul Hameed Stoman Foundation, Jabel Amman, on Tuesday April 27 at 6:30 p.m.

Exhibitions

• Exhibition of Palestinian embroidery at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 9.
• Seventh Annual Book Exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabel Amman, until April 29.
• Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29.

Justice Ministry studies files of 2,600, may reduce prison terms in lieu of amnesty

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Ministry of Justice Hamza Haddad on Sunday described the government's approach to the special amnesty which aims to reduce the sentences of thousands of prisoners who did not benefit from last month's general amnesty.

Haddad said his ministry is studying the files of thousands of prisoners and is expected to issue recommendation to the Council of Ministers to reduce their sentences.

The minister declined to specify whether or not political cases would be included, but said all "cases will be reviewed without exception."

"We have ended a comprehensive study of most of these cases and our report will be submitted to the Cabinet soon," the ministry told the Jordan Times.

He indicated that Public Security Department has supplied the ministry with "thousands names" of prisoners who received different jail terms.

"We are considering all these cases. We cannot tell who will benefit from the amnesty, but the general trend is to reduce their sentences, which first requires a Royal Decree," the minister added.

The minister said that the cases of 2,600 detainees are being studied.

The Cabinet on Saturday recommended to His Majesty King Abdullah to reduce the sentences of tens of juveniles currently serving different jail terms in correctional and rehabilitation centres.

Last month, King Abdullah issued a general amnesty to more than 3,000 prisoners and detainees, but political prisoners were excluded.

The amnesty also excluded those who committed what the court described as "terrorist acts," especially those indicted in the case known as the case of the Arab Afghans, who were convicted for attacking the intelligence office in Baqaa Refugee camp.

The general amnesty also excluded Ahmad Dakameh, the Jordanian soldier who shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls on March 1997.

Relatives of prisoners not included in the amnesty staged sit-ins near the Royal Court and the Ministry of Justice to demand the release of their kin.

The general amnesty also excluded those involved in rape, pre-meditated murder, forgery, embezzlement, theft, issuance of bad cheques and some other cases.

Thousands protest silently outside China central government HQ

BEIJING (AP) — Thousands of people stood silently shoulder to shoulder on streets outside China's central government headquarters Sunday to demand the right to practice a system of meditation taught by a martial arts master living in the United States.

It was the largest demonstration in the 10 years since the military crushed the Tiananmen Square democracy demonstrations. More than 10,000 people crowded the sidewalks for about two-and-a-half kilometres along the streets north and west of Zhongnanhai, the walled compound where China's top leaders work just west of the imperial palace, or Forbidden City.

Demonstrators also gathered near the main gate on the south side of the compound, a short distance from Tiananmen Square on the avenue of Eternal Peace, the city's main east-west thoroughfare.

Demonstrators wanted legal protection for practising falun gong, said a young protester who gave his family name, Sun.

Officials in some areas were "meddling" and preventing people from practising falun, he said.

Falun gong has 70 million to 100 million adherents throughout China according to a government estimate. The group was founded in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, a Chinese native who now lives in New York

and lectures in the United States and other countries, but no longer in China.

Falun is a school of qigong, a system of controlled breathing, martial arts, meditation and healing that has been popular in China since bans on cultural traditions were lifted in the late 1970s. The government sanctions qigong as a unique Chinese tradition, but condemns some charismatic qigong masters for using superstition to fool followers.

The government is studying falun and has not yet reached a conclusion on whether it is an acceptable school of qigong. Wang Kai, an official in charge of qigong under the state sports administration, said Sunday. He declined to comment further.

The gathering began early in the morning in response to critics who call falun a superstition or religion, said a woman running a nearby kiosk.

The government should give falun a "legal environment," said a middle-aged man in the crowd. He declined to give his name or say more, and nervously told a reporter in a low voice, "go now." Many others refused to say anything.

The crowd apparently was worried that the government would ban falun. A one-page statement from the government handed out to demonstrators late in the afternoon said those fears were based on rumours that should be ignored.

China's ruling Communist Party has tried to prevent any large protests that could get out of control and stir up people who are angry over rising unemployment to challenge the party's monopoly on power. But the demonstrators who suddenly appeared on the streets Sunday did not complain about political or economic conditions.

Police stopped traffic that earlier clogged Wenjin street as drivers gawked. Crowds of police guarded the gates of the leadership compound, and others spread out to watch the crowd.

The demonstrators stood or sat along the streets as if waiting for a parade. None held signs or leaflets or cried out demands. Near the main gate of the government headquarters many sat and read a book of Li's teachings.

Followers say falun is not a religion, but a system of meditation and exercise that brings them good health. Critics have said Li claims to be more important than Buddha or Jesus and that falun could become a cult.

People of all ages, including many who were middle-aged or older, stood or sat quietly on the sidewalks. They did not block the streets.

Some sat on pieces of cardboard or folded blankets, and a few held shirts or umbrellas for shade from the glare on a hot day under



Followers of religious cult leader Li Hongzhi besiege the Zhongnanhai leadership compound (background) in Beijing April 25. Tens of thousands of followers of the Falun Gong cult demanded to see Premier Zhu Rongji to express anger over media criticism of their discipline (Reuters photo)

a cloudless sky gray with smog.

Li tells followers that they can achieve enlightenment and protection from evil forces through falun.

In Beijing, "master Li" is revered by followers who read his books, listen to his taped lectures and gather by the dozens or hundreds in parks, department store

parking lots and other public places. They exercise and meditate together openly in public, near large banners that welcome anyone interested in falun.

Former apartheid general sues de Klerk for libel

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — South African President Frederik de Klerk is being sued for libel by an apartheid-era general over comments he made about the military in his autobiography, a newspaper reported Sunday.

A summons on de Klerk, issued by General Chris Thirion, was signed by the registrar of the Pretoria High Court on Friday. Afrikaans-language Rapport newspaper said.

Thirion, former deputy head of military intelligence, was one of 16 military officers fired by de Klerk in December 1992 after evidence emerged that the then president described in his book as "a rat's nest of unauthorised and unlawful actions by military intelligence."

In the book, "The Last Trek — A New Beginning," de Klerk said he had asked General Pierre Steyn, the erstwhile head of the

defence force, to investigate widespread claims that the military was targeting members of the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation groups then involved in constitutional talks with the apartheid government.

De Klerk wrote that Steyn had sketched a "complicated picture of unauthorised, unlawful and criminal activities in some units of the defence force."

Among those involved in these activities were those who could not rid themselves of the "albatross" of their anti-ANC sentiments, and those who were following their "own agendas" against de Klerk's government because it was negotiating with people previously regarded as the enemy.

According to Thirion, it is widely known that he was one of two generals sacked and therefore people reading the book would associate him with criminal and unlawful

activities, and with efforts to undermine the state.

After he was sacked, Thirion asked de Klerk to charge him in a court of law so allegations against him could be tested. This was never done.

In the summons, the newspaper said, Thirion, regarded as one of South Africa's most brilliant generals and now a restaurateur, claims that he has suffered damage to his "reputation, integrity and honesty."

De Klerk, who ruled from 1989, stepped down from power after his National Party was overwhelmed by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress at the historic all-race elections in 1994.

De Klerk quit politics in June 1997 soon after leading his NP out of Mandela's government of national unity. Since then he has become a speaker on the international circuit.

International Court of Justice scrutinises Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Jurists from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) arrived in Malaysia for a weeklong visit to scrutinise the judicial system following global condemnation of the trial of ousted politician Anwar Ibrahim, news reports said Sunday.

A team of three representatives from the Hague-based group will study the independence of Malaysia's judiciary based on international guidelines set by the United Nations, the New Straits Times reported.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, meanwhile, lashed out at foreigners for criticising the nation's courts, saying Malaysia considered it "interfering in the country's internal affairs."

"Who are they to question the fairness of the courts and the country's laws," he was quoted as saying on Sunday by the national Bernama news agency. It was unclear if the comment referred directly to the visiting jurists.

The delegation, which arrived on Saturday, was headed by Lord Abernethy, the chairman of the International Bar Association Judges Forum. He was accompanied by Zimbabwe supreme court judge N.J. McNally and ICJ commissioner for India Rajeev Dhavan.

A draft report on the group's findings will be given to the Malaysian government for comment before a final report is handed to the International Court of Justice.

Deputy Prime Minister Ibrahim Ali met on Saturday with the group. He briefed the jurists on Anwar's case and other issues including Malaysia's internal security act, which allows detention without trial.

The group also planned to meet with members of the legal community.

International jurist and human rights groups have denounced Anwar's seven-month trial and verdict. Amnesty International called Anwar a "prisoner of conscience." The New York-

based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights said the case amounted to political persecution.

Anwar's 78-day trial ended April 14 when the popular former No. 2 leader was sentenced to six years in jail. Anwar has denied the charges against him, saying they were crafted to end his challenge to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

During the trial, Anwar's defence lawyers repeatedly threatened to walk out after rulings in favour of the prosecution. The trial judge barred Anwar's lawyers from using political conspiracy as a defence and held one of the lead defence attorneys in contempt of court.

The visiting jurists intend to examine other high-profile human rights cases.

Lim Guan Eng, an opposition lawmaker, was sentenced last year to 18 months in jail for criticising the government's handling of a rape case. Irene Fernandez, a leading human rights activist, is on trial for "falsely accusing police" of torturing illegal immigrants.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Leading Nigerian politician wants to foster 'Yoruba nation'

LAGOS (AFP) — A leading Nigerian politician who failed to win his party's ticket for the February presidential elections has said his aim now is to bring about a new Yoruba nation within Nigeria. Bola Ige, a former governor of old Oyo State, and a leading figure in Nigerian politics, said before the election that he wanted to play a role in national affairs. Ige has long been seen however as a nationalist Yoruba, one of Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups long militating for a greater voice in the country's political affairs. And the lawyer politician, who was beaten by former Finance Minister Olu Falae for the presidential ticket of the southwest-based Alliance for Democracy, told this Sunday's edition of the newspaper Punch he believed God had not wanted him to play the role of president. "I believe that maybe God wants me to accentuate my activities in bringing about the Yoruba nation within the Federal Republic of Nigeria so that the Yoruba nation will be an example to all the other nations in Nigeria," he said. "I want a Nigeria that is truly federal, in which the Yorubas who must be the benchmark for the entire Nigeria, are not only well governed but keep their civilisation," he said. "Yorubaland will be what you copy in Nigeria." Nigeria is home to more than 200 ethnic-linguistic groups, of which the three largest are the Yorubas, Ibos and Hausa-speakers. Since the 1967-70 civil war in which Ibo separatists were defeated, talk of ethnic separatism has been largely taboo in the country.

Afghan opposition says fighting continues around Bamian

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's Northern Alliance said Sunday the opposition and the Taliban militia were locked in fighting around Behsoud, about 100 kilometres south east of Bamian. "Our commanders from central Afghanistan have confirmed fierce fighting in Kotal-i-Shebar, Kotal-i-Haji Gak (next to Behsoud) and Dar-i-Shekar," Harakat-i-Islami and opposition spokesman, Saad Mohseni, said. The Harakat-i-Islami is one political faction in the alliance. He said in a statement that fighting had also flared again in north west Faryab province where opposition troops had briefly cut supply routes to the main centres of Sheberghan and Maimana. The fighting follows the fall of Bamian in central Afghanistan to the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the opposition last Wednesday. "With the recent fall of Bamian city, there is new impetus in the northern provinces of Samangan, Sare Pol, Balkh, Faryab and Jauzjan to repel the Taliban armies," Mohseni said. The Taliban militia controls about 75 per cent of Afghanistan after six years of civil war. Meanwhile, the alliance has rejected reports that an Iranian plane — delivering supplies to anti-Taliban troops — was forced down by the militia over Afghan air space. "The story is absolutely untrue. No flight has taken place from Iran to Bamian, it is part of a campaign of disinformation," opposition spokesman Abdullah said. The Taliban has declined to comment on the report and no mention has been made in reference to Bamian by the local official media.

Kampala bomb blast death toll rises to four

KAMPALA (AFP) — A policewoman injured in Saturday evening's bomb blast in the Ugandan capital died Sunday, bringing the number of fatalities to four, police said. Three people died instantly and 14 others were injured when the device exploded at just before 8.00 (1700 GMT) about 150 metres from the Nakivubo sports stadium. Thirteen of the injured were still in hospital Sunday and four were said to be in serious condition. Witnesses said a local pro-government militia had been shot dead in the area minutes before, and that the bomb exploded as police were removing his body. But police spokesman John Kibera was unable to confirm the shooting. "I was standing there when the bomb went off," Mohammed Kajoba, 30, of the Crime Prevention Unit, told AFP. "I was hit in the leg and the arm. I ran a few metres, then I collapsed." Kibera said police had not yet established what kind of device was used in the attack and that no group had claimed responsibility. "It should be the same people responsible for the blasts earlier this year," Kibera told AFP. Bomb blasts have become frequent in the Ugandan capital, most attributed to rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces, a small group dominated by Islamic fundamentalists fighting mainly in western Uganda against the government of President Yoweri Museveni. Other attacks have been blamed on a tiny associated group, the Uganda National Army for the Liberation of Uganda. More than 45 people have died in bomb blasts in and around Kampala since 1997.

Police clash with demonstrators in Bangladesh; 20 injured

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Riot police fired teargas shells on Sunday to stop hundreds of demonstrators from marching into the prime minister's office protesting utility problems, witnesses said. At least 20 people, including two policemen, were injured in the clashes during which the protesters from the student wing of the country's main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party set off crude homemade bombs, according to witnesses. The clashes occurred at downtown Bangla motor district, where police erected barbed-wire barricades, a few blocks from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's office. In a bid to overrun the barricades, the demonstrators attacked police with rocks and homemade bombs. Police responded with teargas shells. Police detained at least 15 demonstrators. Opposition parties led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia accuse Hasina's three-year-old government of failure to ensure regular supply of electricity. Bangladesh produces about 1,900 megawatts of power a day, nearly 400 megawatts less than the demand. The deficit causes frequent power outages compounding people's sufferings in the summer.

British citizen shot dead in Johannesburg house

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — A British citizen was shot dead and his wife seriously wounded when they were attacked by two armed men in their house here overnight, police said Sunday. A police spokesman said Roger Previtt, 49, and his wife, 47, and their two children were asleep when the intruders entered the house. Previtt's wife heard a noise and, on investigating, was shot in both legs, the stomach and neck. The attackers struggled with Roger Previtt in the master bedroom, forcing him to the floor and shooting him in the back of the head. The two children were unharmed and the killers fled without taking anything. Previtt's wife was admitted to hospital in a serious but stable condition. The motive for the attack is not known.

Dili calm in wake of agreement on Timor

DILI, East Timor (AFP) — The East Timorese capital was calm on Sunday following the agreement on autonomy hammered out for the territory at the United Nations between Indonesia and Portugal.

U.S. Ambassador to Jakarta, Stapleton Roy arrived here for a visit of a "few days" which he said was aiming at gathering the views of the various factions in East Timor.

"I am here with full (Indonesian) government approval... I am here because I haven't been here for a year and I thought it would be useful to come back again," Roy said shortly after alighting from a small propeller plane at Dili's Komoro airport.

Roy, who was accompanied by three other U.S.

diplomats, including the defence attaché, said that he was to meet with Belo later Sunday while the rest of the his agenda was "still being set up."

Shops were open and people were back on the streets here Sunday. Public transport was also functioning again, an AFP photographer said.

Dili's Bishop, Nobel laureate Carlos Ximenes Felipe Belo conducted a Sunday mass at his residence with some 300 people in attendance.

After two days of talks at the United Nations, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and his Portuguese counterpart Jaime Gama agreed an autonomy package for East Timor Friday.

The agreement, which is

expected to be signed on May 5, includes a plan to hold a direct ballot on autonomy by some 800,000 East Timorese. But there was no agreement on security arrangements for the vote and the arrangements for the vote itself as Alatas had asked to consult Jakarta on both points.

The people of East Timor would be consulted in July or August on whether they will accept the proposal and if rejected, Jakarta has said it will allow the former Portuguese colony to annexed in 1976 to go.

"I think people have only read or heard about the accord today, it has not sunk in yet," said Carlos Guterres, a local NGO activist.

Guterres said that in his view and those of many of

his friends, an international presence, be that a peace keeping or police force, was urgently needed to halt the current violence in East Timor.

"I do not think anybody else can resolve the issue (of violence)," he said adding that although it was not a policy of the Indonesian armed forces, some elements of the military in East Timor had no interest in a peaceful East Timor.

"There is no comment at this stage. The agreement has not been signed yet and changes may still take place," said the chairman of the human rights watchdog, The Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, Aniceto Guterres.

Guterres said that by noon Sunday he had not received any report of violence in

Dili or elsewhere in the territory.

But the chairman of Impettu, the Association of East Timorese Students, Mariano Sabino Lopes, dismissed the agreement in New York as "meaningless."

"They can reach whatever agreement outside of East Timor but what is important is what is happening here," said Lopes.

"Although Dili is relatively quiet, in the districts pressure and violence against pro-independence supporters continue with harassment and abductions," Lopes said.

He added that for his organisation, the agreement was on something offered by the Indonesian government, not what the people in East Timor wanted — independence.

"Whatever it is, we still are of the opinion that as long as Indonesia is still occupying East Timor, we will keep on struggling for independence," he said.

East Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and annexed a year later in a move never recognised by the United Nations, which continues to view Portugal as the region's administering power.

The accord comes on the heels of a peace agreement signed Wednesday in the East Timor capital by pro-Indonesian and pro-independence factions in the territory. Tension and violence between the two camps has risen following Jakarta's surprise announcement in January that it may let East Timor go if the autonomy package is rejected.

إلى هنا

Dr. James J. Zogby

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
جوردين تايمز مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Khaled Al-Karaki

Vice Chairman & Director General

Mohammad Amad

Executive Editor

Abdullah Hasanat

Responsible Editor

Elia Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices

Jordan Press Foundation,

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Silencing the media

REGARDLESS OF whether one believes in the legality, necessity or morality of the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia, it is difficult to dispute the fact that civilian parties are entitled to protection against military action carried out by either side in the conflict. Certainly, the foremost civilian victims of the bombing campaign have been the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, who have been systematically forced out of their homes by Serb forces taking advantage of the NATO strikes as a pretext for their actions. If the accounts of thousands of refugees are to be believed, other civilian parties have been affected as well, including the ICRC, which has not been able to function inside of Yugoslavia since the bombing began, and similar humanitarian agencies. But the second civilian target of the NATO-Yugoslav conflict has undoubtedly been the media.

One day after the beginning of the NATO air strikes, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, in the opening shot of this battle against the media, ordered all Western media out of Kosovo and effectively limited their presence to Belgrade, thus depriving the world of information on what is going on in the troubled province. Soon thereafter, the editor of a leading opposition newspaper in Belgrade was shot dead by unknown assailants. A number of ethnic Albanian journalists from Kosovo, speaking in various foreign countries, gave their accounts of the alleged Serbian atrocities in the province and how they had to escape to relay them. As of late, Milosevic has stepped up his efforts to silence dissent in his country, serving arrest warrants to two opposition journalists from Montenegro, a province of Yugoslavia. The two have been forced into hiding for fear of "torture" at the hands of the Yugoslav army in the event of their capture.

NATO also has a few things for which it must answer. Friday's attack on the offices of Serbian Radio and Television in downtown Belgrade was truly incomprehensible and, as Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini said, "terrible." While the destruction of Milosevic's house could be described as having been done in bad taste, the bombing of a civilian structure, which left at least 10 people dead, cannot be explained as having served any useful purpose. Even if Serb television can be described as a centre that disseminates "hateful propaganda," as several NATO leaders termed it to justify the attack, it is under the entire control of Milosevic's government. Even if it had been permanently knocked off the air, which it wasn't, the Serbian public would have seen it as simply censorship of different kind than to which it is accustomed. Finally, not every journalist can be counted as a puppet of Milosevic propaganda — how can a sports reporter, for instance, incite ethnic hatred?

The media is an invaluable civil institution that allows audiences not involved in the news follow events and make decisions. It must be protected. If Milosevic or NATO do not like the way they are being presented by the media, or are embarrassed by their actions, a better way to respond would be with arguments that counter such "negative" reporting, or a cessation to the activities in question. Attempting to silence the media by force must not be allowed to happen.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Kheirallah Kheirallah said Palestinians are right to be worried as Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov accepted his Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon's invitation to visit the West Bank. It seems that the tour was an attempt by Sharon to convince Ivanov of his security policy, which aims at keeping the largest part of the area occupied, added Kheirallah. Israel and Russia are "flirting" with each other, argued the writer, and this was obvious when Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov "joked" with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu that if he was an Israeli, he would have voted for Netanyahu. Primakov wanted to convey the message to Netanyahu that joint relations have improved. At the same time, despite Israeli complaints that Russia provides Iran with missile technology, this did not prevent Netanyahu from pushing the U.S. to facilitate loans from international donors to Russia, according to Kheirallah. Do Israel's relations with Russia aim at counterbalancing the role of the U.S. in the region, asked Kheirallah. There is a political gap between Washington and Tel Aviv, because of the reluctance of the latter to implement the Wye accords. In other words, the 51-year-old Jewish state wants to say that it has become "mature" enough, and that it does not need the U.S., which has protected the country and assisted Israel to impose itself over neighbouring countries and to occupy their land, argued the writer. In fact, Israel is not "mature" enough because Russia knows its limits when it comes to the U.S. and the current "flirting" between Israel and Russia is nothing but political manoeuvring that will stop after the Israeli elections, said Kheirallah. After May 17, the two parties will remember their actual powers, knowing that the U.S. will not give up its role and Israel will always remain under Washington's custody, which now has a place for Palestinians and Yasser Arafat, Kheirallah concluded.

Washington Watch

The Khalil Gibran Awards and the Arab Americans

WHEN THE Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) presented the first Khalil Gibran Spirit of Humanity Awards last week they helped shine a light on the extraordinary contributions the community is making in American life.

The awards are to be given annually to individuals and institutions that promote tolerance and coexistence. According to the AAIF the awards "aim to promote diversity and cultural interaction and to showcase programmes that foster democratic and humanitarian values across racial, ethnic and religious lines".

The award is named after Khalil Gibran, an Arab American author known throughout the United States as a poet and humanist who was proud of his Arab heritage and who promoted tolerance, valued human endeavours that bettered social relations and individual self worth.

In giving these awards, Arab Americans were not only recognising those who merit acknowledgement they were making a statement about the maturity of the community that is now in a position to give such awards.

Arab Americans also sent a message about the kind of America and world that they want to be a part of shaping for the future.

This year's recipients were an impressive group. Topping the list was former Senator George Mitchell who was recognised for the leadership he displayed in an effort to resolve the conflict over

Northern Ireland. Mitchell, who is part Irish and part Lebanese, has often acknowledged, with pride, both ancestries. He was a Senator for 14 years and served as Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate for six years.

Receiving the award for corporate commitment is the Ford Motor Company.

Ford has an outstanding record of support for the arts, education programs and civic activities geared toward youth assistance, and programs that cross cultural barriers. Its support has extended to Arab American institutions in greater Detroit, including annual grants for the Arab Festival, a youth library, and the Arab Community Centre for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Dearborn.

Accepting the award for Ford was Jac Nasser, its President. Nasser is of Arab descent.

Other Gibran awardees included, Federico Mayor, the Director General of UNESCO, who received the award for International Accomplishment; the National Centre for Neighbourhood Enterprise, a grassroots movement devoted to solving the social and economic problems of poverty-stricken neighbourhoods; and the YWCA, a national organisation which has a consistent and courageous record of challenging injustice and racial discrimination.

As impressive as the recipients of the awards might be, those who presented the awards on behalf of the

AAIF, also have distinguished records of accomplishment. Representing the Clinton Administration and presenting the award to George Mitchell was the Honourable Donna Shalala, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Shalala is the highest ranking Arab American in the President's Cabinet. Two other presenters were outstanding leaders in industry: Richard Abdo, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Wisconsin Energy Corporation and Youssef Ghafari, President and Chief Executive Officer of Ghafari and Associates, one of the nation's leading architectural design firms.

Also among the presenters were two of the nation's most respected media personalities: Diane Rehm, host of a popular nationally syndicated National Public Radio (NPR) show and Helen Thomas, the Dean of the White House Press Corps.

Also on hand for the evening's ceremonies were: the Honourable Edward Gabriel, U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, Senator Spencer Abraham (R-MI), and Congressman Nick Rahall, II (D-WV), Ray LaHood (R-IL) and John Sununu (R-NH) — all Arab Americans.

I write about this event because it is important that the Arab world understand the progress made by Arab Americans in all areas of U.S. life. I recently returned from a visit to the Middle East, where I was struck by how little some of my

Arab friends knew about Arab Americans.

I had brought with me a brochure distributed by the AAIF entitled "Arab Americans: Making a Difference." The brochure describes over 100 prominent Arab Americans—well-known celebrities, who made a mark in government, the media, sports, entertainment, industry, medicine and even fashion design.

The list is an impressive one, as impressive as could be compiled by any American ethnic community. And yet Arab Americans are not known in the Arab world for their accomplishments.

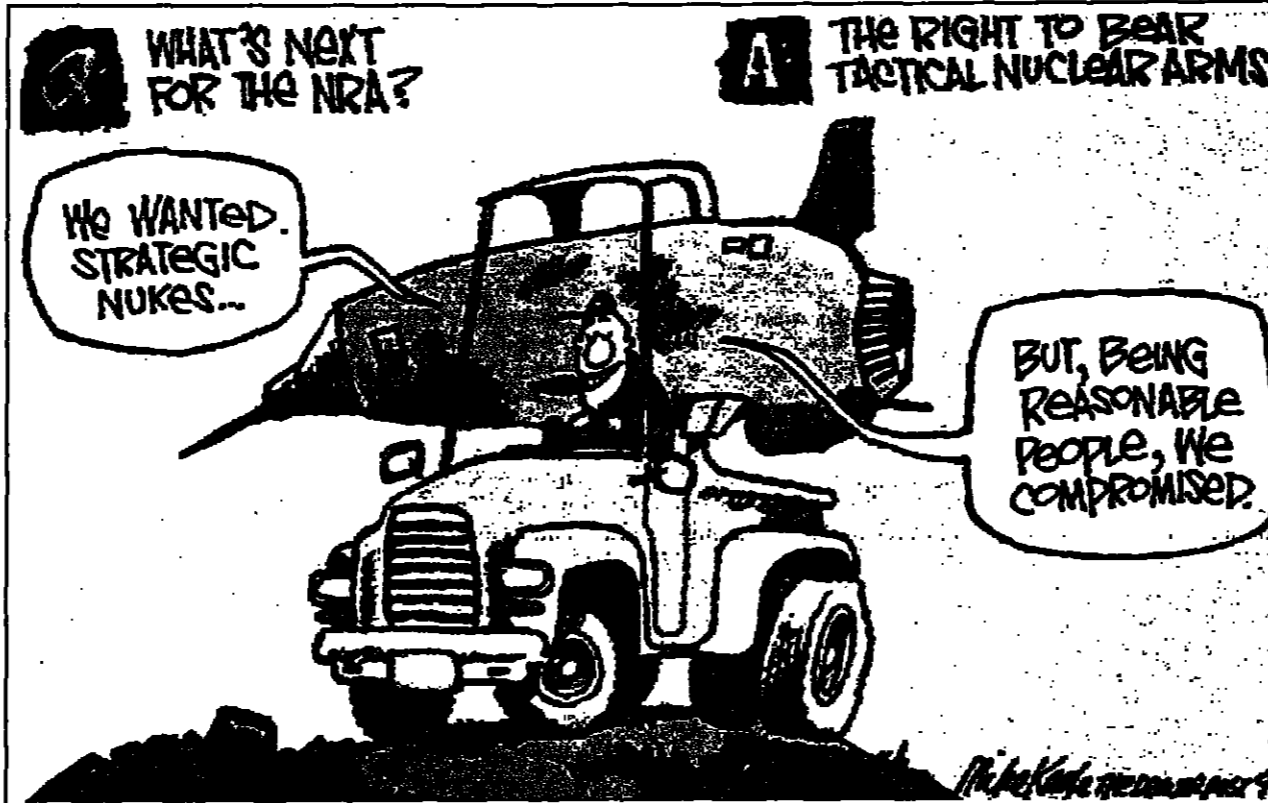
In part this is our own fault. For too many years, Arab Americans have defined ourselves by our problems. With justification, we have complained about discrimination and negative stereotyping. These are real problems and we have been right to attack them. But, all too often, we have created the impression that all that could be said about Arab Americans is we are a discriminated against minority. To limit our self-definition to the problems we face is to create a grossly inaccurate portrait. In fact Arab Americans are an American success story.

In giving the Khalil Gibran Awards, then, Arab Americans accomplish still another purpose. They help define Arab Americans by their accomplishments, by their values and by their vision of the future. We are, as I said in my clos-

ing comments to the evening's festivities, a community that can be defined by "our strong families, our entrepreneurial success, our educational achievements, our faith and our respect for diversity." We have problems, to be sure, but we have created institutions and organisations, and we have the will to help us solve those problems.

In one of his early writings, Gibran penned what he called "An Open Letter to Syrian American Youth." Appearing in the first issue of the Syrian World in 1926, the letter urges Syrian Americans to make "contributions to this new civilisation." Defining what it means to be a good citizen, Gibran writes: It is to stand before the towers of New York, Washington, Chicago and San Francisco saying in your heart, "I am descendant of a people that built Damascus, and Biblos, and Tyre and Sidon, and Antioch, and now I am here to build with you, and with a will." It is to be proud of being an American, but it is also to be proud that your fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid his gracious hand and raised His messengers.

To look at the recipients and presenters of this year's Khalil Gibran Awards and to look at the accomplishments of the millions of Arab Americans who have made real contributions to every aspect of U.S. life, it is clear that, despite difficulties Arab Americans have taken Gibran's advice seriously.



Just your average country

By Gwynne Dyer

THE UNITED STATES is neither a miracle nor a monster, it is just another country. As the world tries to make sense of the latest mass killing in an American school, this is a notion with little appeal for either Americans or foreigners. It is, however, true.

Most Americans, trained from infancy to regard their country as unique, tend to lurch directly from thinking that things in the United States are uniquely wonderful (when they go right) to believing that they are uniquely dreadful (when they go wrong). Thus the Vietnam war, for those who opposed it, was not just a stupid blunder by the bungling officials of an apprentice superpower; it was the most evil war ever waged on this planet. And the Colorado school massacre, coming on top of half a dozen similar incidents in the past two years, is not just the result of stupid laws and bad behaviour; it is a metaphor for the decay of the American soul.

Many non-Americans take the same extreme positions. Some do so because they have a tangled emotional relationship with the fantasy America of the mass media, which they half-hope, half-fear represents their future too. Others agree simply because they hate America: you can imagine what Serbian propaganda is doing with the school killings in Littleton.

So let us pull a long way back and consider more generally the horrors that happen in societies that are mostly made up of decent people. Between September and December of last year, for example, 87 cases of women being horribly burnt by "stove-bursts" were recorded by two major hospitals in the neighbouring Pakistani cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Almost all of these cases, according to Shahmaza Bokhari of the Progressive Women's Association, were actually deliberate wife-burnings.

Pakistanis, though poorer than Americans, have just as high an opinion of themselves and their culture, and would be just as outraged by this comparison as the average American, but stay with it for a moment. Consider what actually happens in all these wife-burnings.

The woman's husband, frequently aided by his mother or other relatives, seizes his wife, pours oil over her, and then sets it alight. The motive is usually financial: she has not paid enough dowry, or her husband

has simply got a better offer. And whether she dies, as her attackers intend, or survives to live out a lonely life of ghastly mutilation and perpetual pain, she will almost never blow their cover story: that the stove exploded and burnt her.

Why not? Because, explains Shahmaza Bokhari, a clinical psychologist who founded the PWA ten years ago, "the social system gives nothing to women. They leave them dumb from the day they are born." And even if the survivors know how to complain, the police and the courts are unlikely to listen so long as the family who committed the crime stick to their story.

Wife-burning is a plague in Pakistan; the PWA alone has logged 1,600 cases in the past ten years. Nor can it be written off as something that only the desperately poor and ignorant do to their women: this is also a middle-class crime that flourishes amidst the grand houses and leafy gardens of Islamabad, Pakistan's purpose-built capital.

Yet everybody would agree that Pakistan, like the United States, is mainly inhabited by good and moral people. How can this sort of thing happen?

The roots of the problem clearly lie in a culture that holds women to be inferior. Most Pakistani men, while implicitly accepting this belief, both subjugate and "protect" the women in their families, for they are not monsters. But for the tiny proportion of men who ARE capable of monstrous acts — and who may number in the hundreds of thousands in such a big population — the laws and customs of Pakistan are a murderers' charter.

Wife-burning has nothing to do with Islam, though Pakistan is overwhelmingly Muslim. It is equally prevalent in neighbouring India, which is predominantly Hindu. This is about local customs, values and laws, and their unintended consequences in societies which, inevitably, include some individuals who are weak in both empathy and self-control.

Now bring it all back to the United States, where practically nobody burns their wives — even though there are greedy and ruthless Americans who are similarly capable of monstrous acts. Why not?

One reason is that women are now regarded in the West as independent individuals. They don't have dowries any more, which makes it less profitable for even the nastiest husband to burn his wife. Another reason is that he probably wouldn't get away with it

the police and the courts are not so thoroughly conditioned to overlook violence against women, and his victim, if she survived, would be unlikely to shield her attacker.

American society does a better job of protecting women — but it does a much worse job of thwarting people like Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. U.S. police and courts take a much more relaxed view than those in Pakistan of houses stuffed full of guns. Americans believe that freedom of speech is so important that even web sites peddling racist hate propaganda and telling you how to make terrorist bombs must be protected (which Pakistanis would regard as stark raving lunacy).

Perhaps the almost oppressive closeness of the average Pakistani family, compared to the loss of contact across the generations that occurs in so many American families, is also relevant here. The sum of the differences, at any rate, has a clear result. Heavily armed teenagers (and even sub-teenagers) massacring their school-mates has become a feature of contemporary American life. It does not happen in Pakistan.

In neither case do the vast majority approve of the dreadful crimes committed by only a few people. But in both cases there is a causal connection between the values and laws of the larger society and the specific deeds that everybody deplores.

Now, if you were really serious about ending wife-burning in Pakistan, you wouldn't wait generations for the whole society's attitude to women to change. You would immediately pass and enforce laws that required all cases where women were burnt, scalded, or splashed with acid in their own homes to be investigated by special prosecutors. And over the longer run you would try to suppress the custom of giving dowries that provides the motive for most of these crimes.

Similarly, if you were really serious about ending school massacres in America, you wouldn't begin by trying to reform the family. You would immediately pass laws that make it very hard for private individuals to own guns at all. And over the longer run you would work on ways of redefining free speech so that you can ban the kinds of films, video games and web sites that desensitise impressionable children to the point where horrific deeds like last Wednesday's massacre in Littleton can seem like fun.

If you were really serious about it.

A paradox

AS WE approach the twenty first century and are about bidding the current twentieth century farewell, a paradoxical question, in my opinion, remains yet unresolved: Why has not the astonishing development in science and technology in this century been accompanied, so to speak, with a paralleled development particularly in terms of human rights? What is crystal clear now, in my attempt to find an answer to this dilemma, is that the greater advances we make in science and technology the worse we achieve in the field of human rights. Unfortunately the current century teems with flagrant examples of endless human suffering, mass killings, renewed cycles of violence, tragedies, genocide, racial cleansing and many other forms of torture and punishment, to the extent that very little can be written in the file of human rights. What to tell future generations, what our legacy to them will be, are also crucial questions we should be prepared to answer.

Mazen Al Tamimi
Amman

The case against overhead power lines

LAST SUMMER Majali's government started a project to remove overhead power lines and place them in underground conduits. Apparently, with the end of his government the project also ended.

There are many reasons why our city should start placing these lines underground. Practically, underground conduits afford the common driver extra safety as, with no poles, there is less chance of collisions, which also affect the inhabitants, because power has to be cut off in order to place the pole back in the ground.

Technically, corona discharges (when the voltage gradient, or electric field strength, at the surface of the conductor exceeds the breakdown gradient of the air, the air near the conductor surface becomes ionised. This condition is evidenced by a visible glow at night and by a buzzing noise). From high-tension, power lines may be sources of interference. Electromagnetic impulses (EMP) resulting from a nuclear explosion (in our case, from possible nuclear testing by Israel) and Iraq is credited with turning off street lights, and coupling to cables unless adequate shielding and penetration control is incorporated into overhead lines. High currents and voltages in a power line may induce currents in a telephone line thus producing noise.

Environmentally, vibration of towers caused by the wind bends the conductors where they are clamped to the insulators and eventually may produce fatigue breakage. Audible noise levels, especially in rain or humid conditions, are high and require wide buffer zones between transmission lines.

Current environmental challenges have been brought on the basis of negative biological effects of the electrostatic field produced by EHV lines. The IEEE Spectrum reported in 1995 the harmful effects of electric fields with respect to cancer; but these effects were also reported with ordinary receptacles (it is prudent not to place the top of one's bed next to a power outlet).

Currently in the U.S., legislation in more than a dozen states requires that all new services to developments of 5 or more residences be put underground. About 1 per cent of total transmission mileage of the U.S. is underground, located mostly in congested urban areas. The cost of constructing an underground line ranges from 8 times (at 69 KV) to 20 times (at 500 KV) that of an overhead line of the same length and power capability. Therefore it is used only where necessary.

A 1986 discovery of a superconducting, mixed oxide material allows superconducting, power delivery technologies to come within the realm of practicality. The first, large-scale, utility application of superconductivity will probably be to underground, transmission cables with extremely low losses; the current-carrying capacity of the new materials will have to be increased to carry the high currents required for large, power transfers. In certain areas, use of underground transmission lines made up of the new type of superconductors might cost far less than the use of today's, common, underground cables.

Yasar Attiyeh
Amman

Arab... comments to the... defined by "our strong... entrepreneurial success... respect for diversity... to be sure, but... and we have the will... to solve these problems... of his early... Letter to Syria... Appearing in the... Syrian Americans... to this new... what a mea... Gibran was... before the tower... Washington, Chicago... saying in... of a paper... and Bible... more to build... "It is to be... American but... that your future... from a... of his growth... of the region... of the million... who have me... that spe...

ers to the editor
A paradox

ase against over
power lines

Features

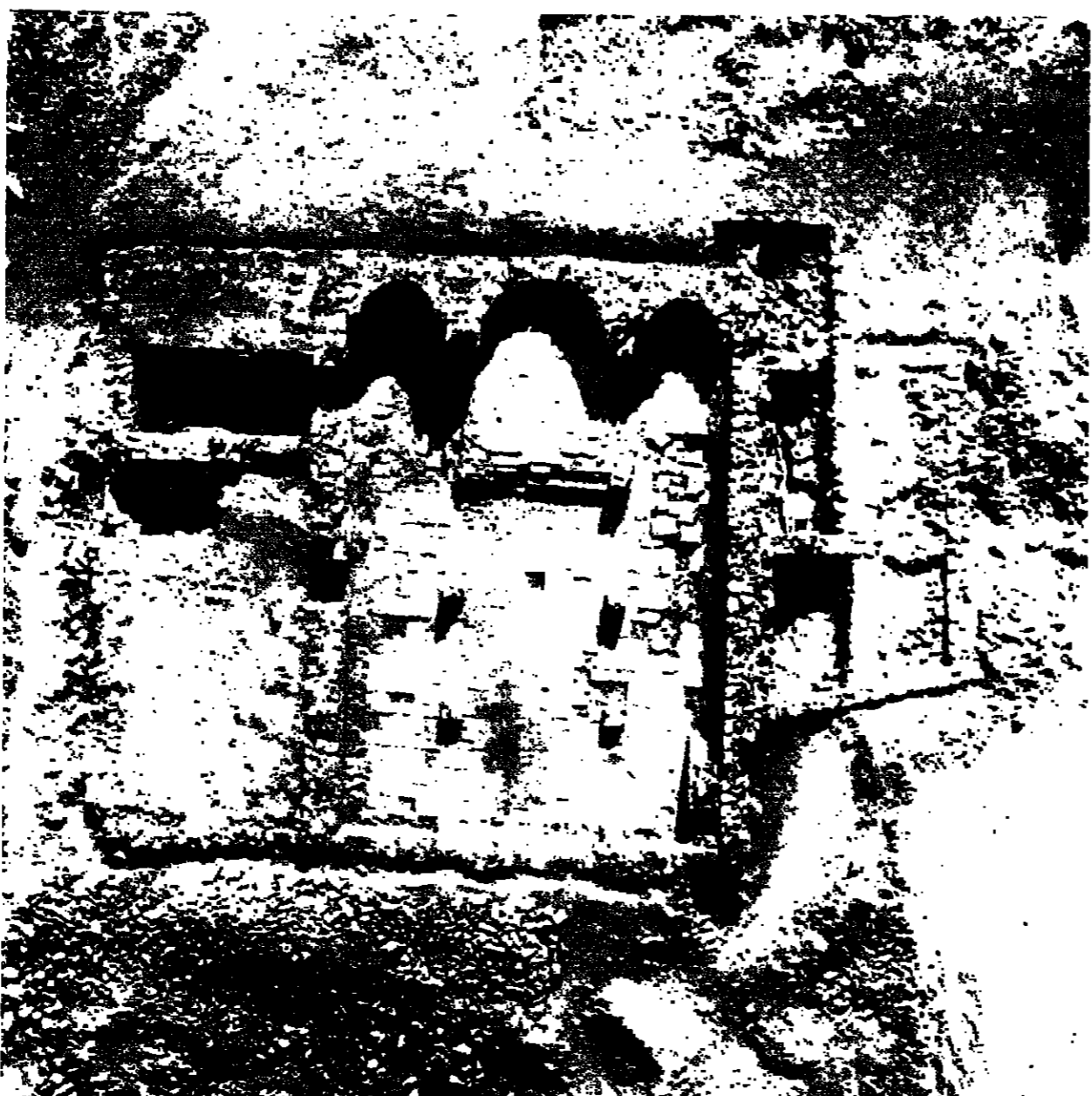
Oracles, empires and early Islamic intrigues: Eight centuries of ancient history at Humayma in south Jordan

(This is the second of three articles on the excavations and surveys at Humayma, in south Jordan.)

THE HUMAYMA area's political status changed in the early 2nd century AD, after the Roman Emperor Trajan moved south and formally annexed Petra and the Nabataean realm into the Roman Empire, around 106-111 AD. The Via Nova Traiana (Trajan's New Road) was built then between Bostra and Aqaba; the town of Auara — as Humayma was called then — became an important station along that vital military and commercial route. All the Roman-Byzantine sites in the region identified by the project's regional survey were associated with the relatively flat areas around the Via Nova Traiana, while the earlier Nabataean forts and watchtowers were located throughout a much wider area of hills, valleys and plains that went beyond the level ground.

The Roman road itself was a masterful engineering feat, measuring from 3.5 to 6 metres wide and crossing some very rugged terrain on bridges and viaducts. Travellers and troops could move quickly on the all-weather, paved road, but usually under the watchful eyes of Roman troops and officials based in watchtowers, forts, fortlets, and mansions alongside the road.

The study of Humayma is being done by a Canadian-led multinational team headed by Dr. John Oleson, professor at the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Victoria (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada). Co-directors of the work are Dr. Kheiriyeh Amr of the



The lower church, one of several Byzantine churches at Humayma (photo by W. and E. Myers)

most prominent architectural features at the site today. It measured 206 x 148 metres, and controlled the area between sister Roman forts at Aqaba to the south and Udrum (15 kilometres south-east of Petra) to the north. The distances between the Roman era stations in this area on the ancient

Principalis and the north/south Via Praetoria. A colonnaded courtyard, perhaps for parades, was located at the junction of the two roads, and nearby was a shrine or an area for religious ritual — typical arrangements for Roman forts. Oleson explained. A sandstone altar and a statue base with Greek inscriptions

tions confirmed the plan of the Principia — the headquarters building — as well as the fort's founding date in the early 2nd century. A silver drachma coin minted for the Emperor Trajan in Bostra between 112 and 117 AD was found alongside early 2nd century pottery from throughout the fort's foundation levels. This "suggests that the fort may have been built during Trajan's reign, immediately after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom," Oleson said.

Brightly coloured frescoes adorned the interior of the building, in some places possibly including gold leaf details. One room with particularly fine floor paving and colourful frescoes is likely to have been the Aedes — the shrine for the military unit's standards, or flags, and a quasi sacred part of the fort.

The excavated barracks area revealed the typical arrangement of a long rectangular block of small rooms set back-to-back alongside the Via Praetoria. This area also revealed the remains of a forge for reworking iron and bronze items, including pieces of weapons and armour. Slag from smelting operations was recovered from an industrial area near the barracks, in the northern half of the fort.

A long but badly weathered Latin inscription was found inside the Principia, a symbol of the

"western" Roman culture of the troops stationed there. The remains of many Nabataean bowls within the fort indicated that the Romans bought some of their needs from the local Nabataeans, Oleson said. The Roman era bathhouse located outside the fort also shows interaction between the two populations who were culturally and ethnically very different from one another. It is also possible that Nabataeans served in the Roman army, according to Oleson and his co-directors.

The excavators initially thought that the town had three separate Roman era military installations: along with the fort, there is a castellum at the town-site itself, measuring 50 x 60 metres, located several hundred metres south of the main fort; and an 11x15-metre watchtower located on the eastern edge of the town, between the town and the Roman highway two kilometres away. The 1998 season showed that the watchtower, in fact, dated from the Byzantine period. (It was used again in the early Islamic and possibly the Ottoman eras, and in its later life served more as a farmhouse.)

Excavations in 1998 clarified many aspects of life at Roman era Hawar in the centuries immediately after the arrival of the Roman garrison. The excavations uncovered nine rooms of a house

built of mudbrick walls on stone foundations, with stone arches and roofing slabs. At least seven different phases of occupation were identified, starting with the initial phase in the late 2nd to early 3rd century AD. From that period the excavators unearthed interior walls of a room with fresco decorations depicting typical Graeco-Roman motifs, such as the Muses and other mythological figures, and a pedestalled birdbath. The other rooms in this house, during this phase, were either undecorated or had simple red bands and dots. During the subsequent renovations in the later phases of the house's use, walls were whitewashed, repaired, and sometimes resurfaced with large potholes attached to the mudbrick with mudplaster.

These inferior renovations may perhaps reflect military damage to the building, to judge by the meaning of seven possible ballista balls found in a fresco dump pre-dating the renovations. Project assistant director Barbara Reeves suggests that this military damage occurred at the time of the revolt of Palmyra's Queen Zenobia.

Another cataclysmic event in the late 3rd cen-

ture caused the house's arches and walls to collapse, but after a brief abandonment the building was partly reused; a cooking area was identified in part of the once-frescoed room. Another bout of collapsing walls soon after this final phase of use caused the building's inhabitants to abandon it for good.

The first phase of the Roman era settlement lasted about a century and a half, and petered out by the late 3rd century AD. "Perhaps as a result either of the attack by Zenobia or of the Diocletianic renovation of the Limes Arabicus (the Roman fortified frontier zone) around 300 AD, the fort was abandoned for several decades at least, and then reworked in the early 4th century AD," Oleson said.

The area north of

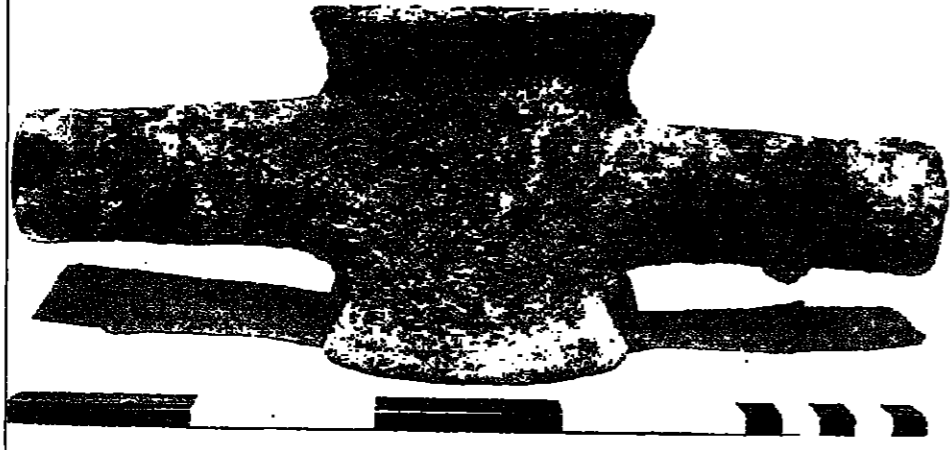


The water reservoir within the Roman castrum (fort), viewed from the south-west (photo by John Oleson)

Humayma started feeling the pressure of raids from the east in the last two decades of the 3rd century, and thus the frontier defensive system required upgrading, which happened under the Emperor Diocletian.

The town was mentioned in several Roman and Byzantine period texts and maps, including Ptolemy's list of Arabian towns in the mid-2nd century, the Peutinger Map's list of road stations in the 4th century AD, and the late 4th/early 5th century AD Notitia Dignitatum, which mentions that a contingent of indigenous cavalry archers (equites sagittarii indigenae) was stationed at Auara.

The fort was remodelled for non-military purposes in the early 4th century, "perhaps for simple domestic occupation by non-military families engaged in pastoral and agricultural occupations," Oleson said.



A bronze water valve from the Roman period (photo by John Oleson)

Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Dr. Robert Schick (Albright Institute, Jerusalem), and Rebecca Foote of Harvard University.

The work is conducted in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, with logistical support provided by the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman. The principal funder for the project has been the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Victoria, with additional funding from the Max van Berchem Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland), the Taggart Foundation (New York, U.S.), and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.

The first Roman troops probably moved to Humayma at the beginning of the 2nd century AD, perhaps to secure and patrol the new highway, according to Oleson. The troops were based in the Roman fort within the town, a substantial structure laid out in a (typically Roman) symmetrical manner. The fort is one of

Peutinger Table — from Zadaqatta to Auara to Praesidium to Aila — correspond exactly to the distances from the sites today known as Sadaqa (south-east of Petra), Humayma, Khirbet Khalide (alongside the railway, north of Aqaba and Wadi Rum), and Aqaba.

This three-hectare fort was a relatively large facility for its day; only the major legionary fortresses at Lejjun (east of Karak) and Udrum were larger in size. The fort was entered through four gates, each flanked by projecting rectangular towers. Other projecting corner towers defined the four corners, and a total of at least 12 square, projecting intermediate towers were located along the four sides. A rampart walkway was identified inside the three-metre-thick exterior walls. Inside the north-west corner of the fort the Roman built a large water reservoir measuring 29x14x3 metres, which is well preserved today.

The four gates led into the two main streets of the fort, the east-west Via

found here were dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus and as yet unidentified "Savior God." Charcoal graffiti on the rough white plastered walls of the portico of the courtyard included a palm tree, a man riding a horse or camel, an ostrich, and human caricatures.

The 1996-1998 excava-



The excavated Roman baths at Humayma (photo by C. Mundt)

Meridien
مقهى وباري الفجر ليلة وليلة
EVENING & ONE NIGHT RESTAURANT
Presents
الاستعراض
LADIES NIGHT
Monday & Every Monday
الاستعراض وكل اثنين
COUPLES ONLY
No Cover Charge & بدون رسم دخول
Come & Join Us
With Our Famous Singer
الاستعراض المحبوبة
جاك كين خوري
JACQUINE KHOURY
الاستعراض الشرقي
Rima ريم
الفرقة الموسيقية
Blow up Band
تحت إشراف
For More Information Call Tel 5696511 Extension 6762-6532

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Tanning Company complains of dumping large quantities of imported shoes on the local market

**** LOWER SALES** by about JD0.4 million last year have resulted in a slight decline in the net profit of the Jordan Tanning Company which said that it is still facing competition from imported industrial leather. "Dumping large quantities of new and old shoes on the local market is negatively affecting the local tanning industry," Board Chairman Talal Ghazawi told the ordinary meeting of the general assembly.

The company's sales amounted to JD8.6 million last year compared to JD8.9 million in 1997. The 4.5 per cent drop was due to a decline in local sales and exports both of which totalled JD5.7 million and JD2.8 million respectively. In 1997 local sales and exports

amounted to JD6.0 million and JD3.0 million. Consequently net profit dropped by JD150,000 from JD757,000 recorded in 1997 to JD606,000 at the end of 1998.

According to the annual report, the company's tanning section generated a JD230,859 net profit and the shoes section accounted for the remaining JD375,959. The report showed the total balance sheet at JD5.8 million with the equity of the shareholders standing at around JD4.7 million.

The shareholders concluded their meeting by approving the distribution of dividends at a rate of 30 per cent as recommended by the board of directors (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Dustour).

Arab International for Education and Investment Company distributes JD2.4 million in dividends

**** AS A** result of a seven per cent rise in earnings, or JD1.2 million, and a 14 per cent increase in operational costs, or JD1.3 million, the Arab International for Education and Investment Company posted a JD4.4 million net pretax profit at the end of last year. The company which owns the Applied Science University, said in its annual report that the earnings from the university amounted to JD17.4 million and that operational costs and other expenses totalled JD12.9 million. After accounting for income tax the company posted a JD3.0 million net after tax profit.

The annual report showed that the company's total assets amounted to JD37.0 million compared to JD36.0 million at the end of 1997. Board Chairman Abdullah Abu Khadijeh told the general assembly which was meeting in an ordinary session that fixed assets were higher at the end of 1998 because of new buildings, furniture and equipment that were added to the facilities of the university.

Abu Khadijeh told the shareholders that the

company's indebtedness to banks dropped by 29 per cent or JD1.24 million last year and that shareholders' equity increased by two per cent from JD22.3 million at the end of 1997 to JD22.7 million. He referred to the rise in capital to JD20.25 million in 1997 to highlight the expansion that the university implemented in 1998.

He noted in this regard that the investments of the company also increased last year to JD7.5 million from JD4.6 million at the end of 1997 despite the liquidation of some affiliated entities. The increase, however, was highlighted in the annual report to be in Ibn Al Haitham Hospital in which the company raised its equity from 48 per cent when it was established to 53 per cent at present.

The general assembly concluded the meeting by approving the distribution of JD2.4 million in dividends to be distributed among shareholders at a rate of 12 per cent (Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Iran to shut mobiles of 18,000 officials

TEHRAN (R) — cash-starved Iran is about to shut off the mobile phones of up to 18,000 state officials to save money, Iranian Television has reported.

It said the measure, stipulated in the country's state budget for the Iranian year which began on March 21, covered 95 per cent of mobile phones supplied to senior state officials.

An official of the State Telecommunications Com-

pany told the television the move would save the government up to 1.4 billion riyals (\$480,000) per month. The telephones would be sold to the public as required by the budget item, he said.

The Iranian government said last year it faced a deficit of six trillion riyals because of a slump in oil prices.

Iran, the world's third largest oil exporter, depends on petrodollars for 80 per cent of its hard currency earnings.

Yamani, Lukman warn of high oil price danger

LONDON (R) — OPEC producers should not allow oil prices to rise too far or they will sow the seeds of another damaging oil market slump, OPEC Secretary General Rilwanu Lukman and former Saudi Oil Minister Jassim Yamani have agreed.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) new

output curbs may usher crude prices to \$18 a barrel by year's end but prices higher than that were no longer in the group's interest, said Lukman, a former Nigerian oil minister.

"Anything above that could be counterproductive because it would encourage non-OPEC supplies, and while we expect OPEC members will stick to their agreement, let's say it might put some pressure on their restraint," he told Reuters in an interview.

"Engaging in a series of massive output cuts as OPEC has done over the last year or so will eventually push oil prices back up to \$18 a barrel and perhaps send them beyond \$20 a barrel, but can they be expected to stay there?" asked Yamani.

"Might not this policy carry within it the seeds of its own destruction?" he told delegates at the Centre for Global Energy Studies conference.

Caution among OPEC members over how far oil prices might rise as a result of the stringent new output limits they agreed in March contrasts with group celebrations when oil rose above \$20 a barrel in 1996 and 1997.

That high price, combined with a slump in Asian oil demand, brought extra output onstream to cause a market slump which last year cost OPEC more than \$50 billion in lost revenues. Oil prices have risen swiftly since OPEC agreed lower exports, valuing benchmark U.K. Brent blend near \$16 from less than \$10 in late February.

"Prices have already moved up more than 50 per cent and we expect them to continue moving in that general direction. By the end of the year maybe they will be between \$17 and \$18," said Lukman.

He said there were "substantial indications" that OPEC members were sticking by their pact and reducing supply as required from the beginning of April.

"Although there may be a temptation to produce a little bit more at higher prices, we know from experience that is counterproductive," he added.

Yamani said that an excessive price rise was guaranteed to restore confidence in high cost oil producing regions and sow the seeds of another downward cycle in boom-bust oil prices.

"The cuts do not constitute a long term therapy for OPEC's problem of stabilising its members' oil income but merely an analgesic to relieve the short term pain," he said.

"The danger if prices go too high is that countries

outside OPEC that were forced to shut in production may be encouraged to come back," admitted Lukman.

OPEC action in reining back supplies had sent other producers the message that the group would come to the rescue if prices dropped again, said Yamani.

"If oil producers outside OPEC are convinced OPEC cannot live with low oil prices... then these producers will tend to undertake oil field developments on the assumption that oil prices will be supportive if not sooner than later," he concluded.

Meanwhile, the IMF has warned that commodity prices are expected to fall further this year, with oil prices dropping 8.3 per cent, and any pickup from 2000 is likely to be slow.

Oil prices are forecast to fall 8.3 per cent this year in dollar terms, after a 32.1 per cent plunge in 1998, while nonfuel commodity prices are seen dropping 4.0 per cent this year in dollar terms after falling 14.8 per cent last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a report.

"The overall weakness of commodity prices is expected to continue in 1999" because of slow demand, large supplies and rising inventories, the report said.

"Beyond 1999 commodity prices are forecast to recover, depending on the strength of the global business cycle upturn, but the recovery is expected to be slow," the IMF warned.

"A full rebound from current low levels should not be anticipated, even after the East Asian crisis and the recession in Japan have ended, owing to the secular increase in supplies," it said.

Oil prices are forecast to rise 13.4 per cent in dollar terms in 2000, with nonfuel commodity prices gaining 1.8 per cent, but this will be far from offsetting the price falls of the past two years.

Because of the likely slow turnaround, commodity exporters, particularly Middle East oil exporters, cannot continue to rely on using reserves and external borrowing to try to meet the shortfall, the report said.

Even if the recent pickup in oil prices were sustained, in would only "ease the pressures on oil producers to some limited extent."

"Countries that have so far relied on reserves and external borrowing to weather the effects on their external balances need to begin to reduce their domestic absorption," the report concluded.

Banks lower interest rates on Saudi riyal

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi banks have lowered their interest rates on the kingdom's currency following the end of a wave of speculation on the riyal as oil price remain firm, newspapers have said.

The Saudi British Bank has lowered its rates on six-month deposits by half a point to six per cent and by a quarter point to 6.25 per cent for one year deposits, the Al Iqtisadiya newspaper said.

Other banks have lowered their rates to similar levels, the newspaper said.

An official from the Saudi Hollandi Bank, Ziyad Jawfi, told the newspaper that "the rise in oil prices, which has weakened demand for the dollar, was a determining factor in the lower interest rates on the riyal."

Interest rates in Saudi Arabia are set by banks individually based on supply and demand. Banks' deposits with the central bank do not receive interest payments.

The riyal has been hit by two large waves of speculation, the first in the summer of last year and a second in March this year.

Speculation was fuelled by fears that low oil prices would place undue pressure on the Saudi economy.

Brazil shuts embassies

BRASILIA (R) — Brazil is scaling down its diplomatic activities as part of a sweeping cost-cutting plan designed to restore foreign investor confidence in Latin America's biggest economy. Brazil will shut its embassies in Cameroon, Kuwait and Tunisia and close consulates in the United States, Switzerland, Germany, France, Puerto Rico, Canada and China, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The deactivation of the embassies is temporary and will not affect the intensity of Brazil's relations with the three countries," it said. "As soon as the current outlook of economic and financial restrictions is overcome, the Brazilian government intends to reactivate them."

RADISSON SAS ANNOUNCES HOLIDAY WINNER: AMMAN

RADISSON SAS Hotel Amman has announced that Ahmed Odeh of Jordan Telecom was the lucky winner of the Key Card Treasure Hunt. This was held from the 20th March - 20th April in cooperation with Lufthansa Airlines and the Radisson SAS Hotel Berlin, giving Odeh and his wife a free holiday for 6 days in Berlin, Germany. The Radisson SAS Hotel Amman would like to thank the sponsors and the 470 people that took part by viewing the newly renovated facilities the hotel has to offer.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Give work your full attention today. Perfection is required. Even the tiniest mistake will be noticed and pointed out. Looks like there's a quality control inspector following you around, but it's really a good thing. If you don't have someone like that checking up on you, do it yourself. That'll be even more impressive.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like you're lucky today with money, and possibly also with love. The money could come from an air windfall, possibly something you applied for long ago and won. As for love, it looks like a friend is under stress. Offer a shoulder to cry on, and viola, you'll emerge as the hero in the situation without much effort at all.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Looks like there's some sort of mess that has to be cleaned up at home. If you can't quite figure out how to do it, get a friend to help. You be the brains behind the operation and let somebody else provide the strong back. Hey, might as well get a couple of those, and get a few other chores done while you're at it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're smart today, and persistent. It should be relatively easy to concentrate your attention and remember what you're learning. You need to plan your day. Don't waste it by memorising plots to old movies, unless, of course, you plan to write a screenplay. At any rate, you can see there's a little bit of responsibility involved. Now that you know you have talent, use it wisely.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you had tonnes of money, what would you spend it on? Toys? Games? Ways to have more fun? That's probably what you'd like to do with it today, but it doesn't look like there's enough. Well, there might be, if you put your money along with somebody else's. You'll need more than just a partner to help you with this job. You'll need a whole team.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're good at picking up details today, and subtle innuendoes. Nothing will get by you for long, but don't use this razor sharp wit just to comment on the foibles of your co-workers. Use it for something more practical. Study up on how to invest your money so you can become fabulously wealthy, for example.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Somebody's nagging you to do things better than you've ever done them before, and you're probably resisting. What you've done before has been magnificent. Everybody else loves it. How come one person keeps pestering you to improve? That person might even be your own conscience. Polish your act to perfection and become the star you've always wanted to be.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like your friends are busy, making more work for you. That's kind of nice, in a way. It's good to do business with your friends, if you're in business, that is. If you're just doing favours for them, you might want to reconsider. Would it be better for them to learn how to do some of these things on their own? Maybe you should be teaching, instead of trying to do it all.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't let your friends talk you into playing hooky today. There are things that have to be handled and you're the only one who can do the job right. You're the only one who knows exactly whom to call, and when. Follow up all your good leads. Once that's all out of the way, the rest of the day looks good for meetings and social get-togethers.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You are the key to everybody else's success today. You know what needs to be done and how to do it. Without you, they'll be floundering helplessly. You're the one with the experience, the know-how, the tact, the leadership qualities, so don't just sit back and watch them sink. Jump in there and show 'em how it's supposed to be done.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This looks like a good day to go shopping for household items. You're going to be good with money right now, — practical, sensible, all those qualities you've always admired in others. While you're smart in many ways, shopping probably isn't one of them, because you assign it a low priority. But today, get interested in it. You might get a really good deal.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're going to have to face a little opposition today, and maybe a little criticism, too. Just what you always wanted — someone to point out your character defects so you can correct them and achieve perfection. And you probably know who. The topic under discussion today: money, and how you handle it. Don't bother to argue with this person. Just take notes.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

A LOVE STORY OF STYLE

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale
Furnished & Unfurnished
For more information call:
Abdoun Real Estate
5820605/5920609/079630007
Web Site is
www.abdoun.com.jo

STUDIO HAIG

Professional Quality
Develop your colour
film at our shop
and get:
• JUMBO photo
size 30% larger.
• FREE FILM
36-Exp
Shmizani - Opposite Ricardo Cafe
Tel. 5604042
Sweflich - Opposite Swedish Library
Tel. 5822891

FOR RENT

Deluxe Villas and Apartments
SANABEL
Real Estate
SWEIFIYEH
A. Hajarat Complex
Tel. 5864230 - 5865167
Mobile: 079/537588

Want to Earn Extra Money?

Are you social and enjoy fashion?
Earn money from your home at your own time easily and enjoyably
Call: 5538572
Mecca Street
e-mail: STWD@aramex.com

Budget

Car Rental & Leasing
WE RENT LESS
— DAILY —
— WEEKLY —
— MONTHLY —
Telephone: 962-6-5698131
Fax: 962-6-5673312
P.O.Box: 960486
Amman-11196, Jordan
E-mail: budget@go.com.jo
An Independent Budget system Licensee

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42
&
Fax: 5696183

BRUNCH

every Friday from 11 a.m. to 10 JD ++
Children under 12 only 5++
Sweifich - Al Hamra Street Tel: 5819730

Amra Forum Hotel

At 6th Circle
Tel: 5516001
Music, Music, Music,
Master of Boogie Woogie, a pianist of international standards
featuring at the Wadi Rum Bar nightly except Mondays.
Your Friendly Host

Winners, and losers, celebrate World Youth Championship

LAGOS (AFP) — As Spain and Japan both celebrated Sunday after the end of the World Youth Championship, Nigerians said the tournament had shown fears about the staging the event here were exaggerated.

In the National Stadium, Lagos, Saturday, the Spanish Under-20 team thrashed Japan 4-0 to win the three-week youth soccer championship, taking their first ever FIFA tournament win.

Spain had clearly outplayed most sides in the 24-nation tournament, losing no matches and drawing only once since April 3, and the win was warmly applauded by the partisan Nigerian crowd, packed into the 45,000-seater stadium.

Speaking to reporters after the match, as a volley of fireworks lit up the sky for the closing ceremony, an emotional Spanish coach Inaki Saez dedicated the victory to his late mother who died during the competition. "I will always remember Nigeria because my mother died while I was here and I am dedicating this triumph to her," Saez said.

Captain Pablo Orbaiz said he thought the team had done themselves proud. "We have demonstrated that the Spanish know how to play football," he said.

Two-goal final hero Pablo Gonzalez said meanwhile the win was the "most emotional moment" of his life.

"This is the most emotional moment of my life and I hope that there will be lots more like it. When the match was over, we did not believe it," he told reporters.

For Japan, even to get a silver medal in the tournament was considered something of a victory.

Frenchman Troussier



Spanish team members hold the cup aloft after beating Japan 4-0 in the FIFA Juniors World Championship in Lagos (AFP photo)

told reporters Japan could be proud of a team which had "triumphed" in getting to the last two in a competition of 24 of the world's top footballing nations.

"We can only be happy with our second place. For a country like Japan, which is just getting started in footballing terms, just getting to the final is a victory," he said.

Mali, who placed third after beating Uruguay 1-0 on Saturday, were also pleased with the outcome.

The fifth-ranked African side before the tournament, they only got into the final as Nigeria had already qualified as hosts and their performance was their best ever on the international stage.

For Nigeria meanwhile, the event was a qualified success.

From an opening match draw against Costa Rica to their quarter-finals drubbing by Mali, the home side were never on form on the pitch.

undermined Nigeria's hopes of hosting the 2006 World Cup, but praised the handling of the youth event.

Blatter accepted that Nigeria had still a long way to go in building the hotels and setting up transport facilities needed for the senior tournament, with a "quantum leap" between that and the junior championship, FIFA officials said.

But the youth tournament had worked, he said. "We did it. I can say that we have had a successful championship," said the FIFA president.

Among the clear losers of the tournament were several leading nations which had gambled on sending under-strength sides, including past winners Argentina, and top European sides Germany and England.

Argentina struggled to beat lowly Kazakhstan 1-0 in their opening match, and went home in the second round, while Germany and England departed after their first three matches.

England, indeed, picked up the wooden spoon, being the only side to fail to score a single tournament goal. Even Kazakhstan did better.



Japanese Ogasawara holds his head in his hands as Spaniards jubilate after beating Japan 4-0 in the FIFA Juniors world championship in Lagos (AFP photo)

Marseille's Maurice out to injury

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — Olympique Marseille striker Florian Maurice has been ordered to rest for at least eight days by club doctors here on Sunday after suffering from an ankle sprain.

Maurice was injured during Saturday's humiliating 4-0 defeat to outgoing champions Lens, and was replaced by Christophe Dugarry in the 25th minute of play.

Marseille defender William Eric Gallas, who was also taken off the pitch after colliding with Lens' Tony Vairelles, was declared fit for training, after undergoing a scan on Saturday night.

Stunned after being struck in the face Gallas regained consciousness around 23:00 on Saturday night, according to teammate Dugarry.

Title favourites Marseille hung on to their one-point advantage over title rivals Bordeaux, despite their loss to Lens, after Bordeaux lost 2-0 at Sochaux.

Fed Cup Germans overpower Japan 3-1 in dramatic comeback

HAMBURG (AFP) — Germany made a dramatic comeback into the world's elite with a dramatic 3-1 victory over Japan in the Federation Cup World Group Two tournament here on Sunday.

Handicapped by the absence of World No. 1 Steffi Graf, Anke Huber and Marlene Weingartner — out of the WTA tournament because of injury — the Germans nevertheless secured victory on Sunday from being one match all on Saturday.

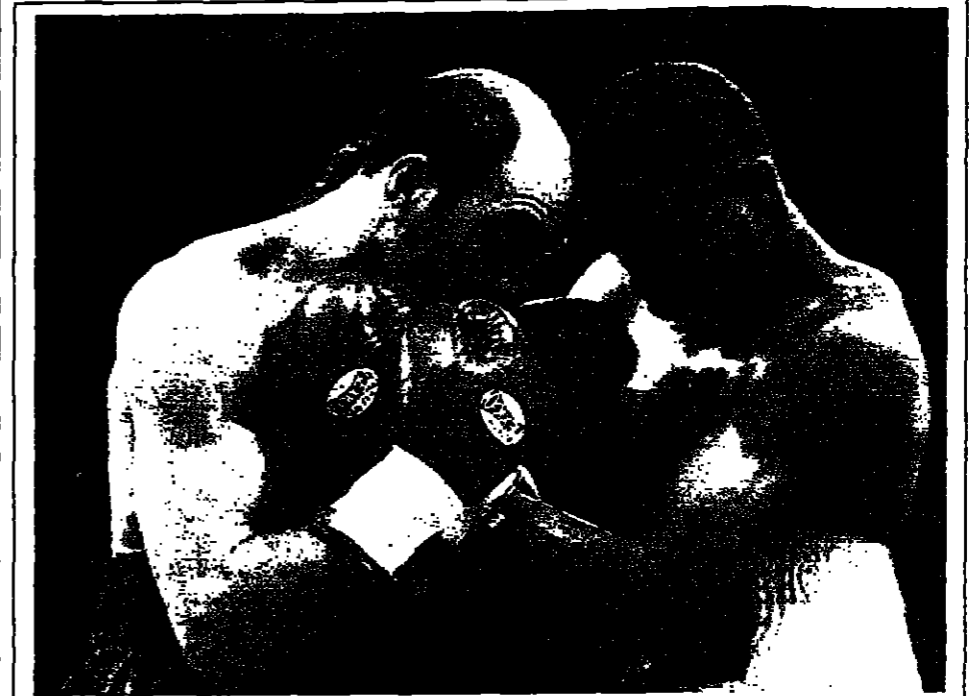
World No. 13 Elena Wagner took her match against No. 84 Miho Saeki of Japan 7-6 (10/8), 6-3 after losing Saturday's match to World No. 139 Shinobu Asagoe 7-6 (8/6), 6-1.

Japan's Ai Sugiyama, World ranked No.

24, withdrew Saturday morning from her country's scheduled singles match with Wagner and was replaced by 22-year-old Asagoe.

However, the German victory was assured by Andrea Glass, 65th in the world, who in winning 6-4, 6-3 subjected Asagoe to the same fate she subjected Miko Saeki to on Saturday.

German coach Markus Schur couldn't hide his delight stating that Glass "confirmed her superb form in training and has the necessary form to enter the Top 20."



Hacine Cherif of Lyon, France (L) battles American Keith Holmes for the WBC World Middleweight Championship in Washington, DC. Holmes won the fight after the referee stopped the fight in the seventh round (AFP photo)

Cole rescues point for United

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United failed to oust Arsenal from the top of the English Premiership on Sunday after they had to settle for a 1-1 draw against Leeds United at Elland Road.

Against a side chasing hard for third place, United's 25-match unbeaten run was in danger of coming to an end when Leeds winger Harry Kewell teased and tormented the Red Devil's defence before setting up Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink for his 18th of the season.

But an Andy Cole equaliser bundled home from close range ten minutes into the second half left United a point behind Arsenal with one match in hand.

The opener on 32 minutes was just reward for Leeds,

who themselves were looking to stretch their own record to 10 matches without defeat and celebrate coach David O'Leary's new five-year contract.

O'Leary has vowed to take Leeds to the title inside that period and for a while they had the better of counterpart Alex Ferguson's treble chasers.

United, a pale shadow of the side which stunned Juventus in Turin last Wednesday, had just the one chance during the first 45 minutes when Leeds keeper Nigel Martyn twice cleared off the line within a second to deny Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole.

Kewell could have put

Leeds ahead three minutes from the break, flinging himself at a Stephen McPhail centre, but his powerful diving header flashed narrowly wide.

Ten minutes after the restart the visitors were back on terms when Turin match-winner Cole stabbed home his 23rd goal of the season from close range.

Skipper Roy Keane's deft cross picked out Nicky Butt at the far post and although Martyn produced a fingertip stop to keep out the midfielder's header, Cole was on hand to poke the ball beyond the England international keeper.

Leeds suffered a blow after teenage defender Jonathon Woodgate was forced to limp

off with a knee injury sustained as he challenged Cole for United's goal.

Woodgate's chances of making his England debut in Wednesday's friendly against Hungary following the first call-up of his career now hang in the balance.

Leeds largely lost their way after Cole's predatory strike as United upped the tempo.

The hosts did almost regain the lead three minutes after Cole's goal, but Wes Brown, partnering David May in central defence in the absence of Achilles injury victim Jaap Stam, produced a timely challenge on Smith after the teenager had been put in the clear by Lee Bowyer.

It was a rare chance for the home side, though, who had gone off the boil since the break in front of a season-high crowd of 40,225, with Ferguson's side looking the more likely to find the winner.

Dwight Yorke should have won it at the death for Manchester United, but after a near one-two with Teddy Sheringham he fired just wide of the upright.

Croatia win FIFA Fair Play award

LAGOS (AFP) — Croatia won the FIFA Fair Play award Saturday as the World Youth Championship wound up here.

The Croatians, ousted in the second round by Brazil, were voted by FIFA officials for the award, followed by Ghana and United States.

The best player award, voted by accredited journalists, went to Mali's Seydou Keita, followed by Nigeria's Pius Ikedia and Spain's Pablo Gonzalez.

ELLA BACHE Skin Care Centre will be hosting a specialist from Paris to organise Training Programme. Starting Friday 23/4/99 till Sunday 25/4/99

Sat. 24/4/99	Fatima Centre	10:00 a.m.	Mecca Str. Tel.: 5512006
Sat. 24/4/99	Bait Al Jamal Saloon	04:30 p.m.	Rabia/Loaloo Al Rabia Centre Tel.: 5536170
Sun. 25/4/99	Salah Saloon	05:00 p.m.	Zarqa Tel: 05/3902024
Mon. 26/4/99	Flix Centre	11:00 a.m.	Airport Way, Beside Safeway Tel. 5811240
Tue. 27/4/99	Robina Centre	05:00 p.m.	Abdoun Tel.: 5923163

For further information, please call: 5678841/2

FOR RENT

Fully Furnished Ground Floor Flat (suitable for diplomats) Located in Shmeisan/Rabia area. Consists of: Big garden, garage, 250 sq.m., 3 bedrooms (one master), 4 bathrooms, maid's room, living room/breakfast area, dining & guest hall, sunroom, phone. Interested tenants, please call: 5602883/079-574437

FURNISHED OR UNFURNISHED FLAT FOR RENT

Second floor flat, part of a villa, with an area of 200 sq.m. Consists of two large bedrooms, two complete bathrooms, L-shaped sitting and dining room, two large verandas, central heating, private entrance, and separate telephone. Possibility of fixing a dish. Location: Near Jordan Hospital, Shmeisan. Suitable for a regional office. For further information, please call Tel.: 5680131

FOR SALE

Sports car (duty unpaid)
MGF sports car, 1997 model, red colour, full options, mileage only 1,500 km.
For those interested, please call: 5930745 from 08:30 hrs to 17:00 hrs

Apartment For Rent

Large (340 sq.m.) Furnished or Unfurnished
Beautifully decorated - American style
Um-Essummaq - Tel. 079/502145 (Dr. Nasri)

Offices For Rent

Offices located between 4th and 5th Circles - Jabal Amman, with telephone and carport.
Enquiries at Tel.: 5678376
Also adjacent furnished apartment with 2 bedrooms and garden.

Two Modern Furnished Flats For Rent

1- In Sweifiyeh, area 180 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, office, dining and sitting areas, fully equipped kitchen, A/C unit, satellite, phone.
2- In 4th Circle, area 150 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, dining and sitting areas.
Interested tenants call: 5602883 or 079-574437

VACANCY

English teacher

parttime or fulltime

Native speakers

Tel. 5583619

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre

CINEMA TEL: 463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Steven Spielberg's

ANTZ

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15

SAVING

PRIVATE RYAN

Show: 9:30

CINEMA TEL: 463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Sophie Marceau ...

in Leo Tolstoy's

ANNA

KARENINA

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5699238

PLAZA

Antonio Banderas ... in

THE MASK OF ZORRO

Shows: 12:30, 3:30

Bruce Willis ... in

ARMAGEDDON

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5677420

CONCORDE

ALWAD MAHROUS

BTA' AL WAZIR

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE 2

DISCLOSURE

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5934793

GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Will Smith & Gene Hackman ... in

ENEMY OF THE STATE

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL: 5934793

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Dennis Quaid & Natasha Richardson ... in

THE PARENT TRAP

Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

Hisham Yares Theatre

TEL: 4625155

The political satire

AL SALAM AL

Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Israeli settlers set up home on W. Bank hill

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A family of Israeli settlers has set up home in a large container on a hill in the West Bank. Israeli public radio reported on Sunday, amid a renewed push by Jews to settle in Arab areas.

The settlers moved into the shipping container set up near the settlement of Maale Levona between Ramallah and Nablus in the north of the West Bank, it said.

Israeli authorities also launched archaeological searches on Sunday in Hebron to prepare for the construction of new homes for settlers in Tel Rumeida, in the heart of the divided West Bank city of Hebron.

Work is also under way to expand the settlement of Havat Maon near Hebron, the radio reported.

Anti-settlement group Peace Now claims that Jews have established some 20 footholds on West Bank hill-tops since the signing of the Wye River peace accord

between Israel and the Palestinians in October.

"It's obvious that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has chosen to allow the settlers to do as they please in exchange for their support for the [May 17] elections," Peace Now said.

The radio reported that rabbis in the West Bank had allowed work on the settlements to go ahead during the Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest.

In another development, a right-wing Israeli MP said that settlers plan to take over nine houses left empty by Palestinians in a mostly Arab neighbourhood of Arab east Jerusalem.

The buildings in the Sheikh Jarrah district have been acquired by an ultra-nationalist religious group known as Mityashvei Zion which is run by MP Benny Elon of the extreme right-wing Moledet party.

"The aim is to create continuity on the ground between

west and east Jerusalem," Elon told the radio.

Settlers will take over three of the houses in Sheikh Jarrah on Tuesday and the remaining six at a later stage, the radio said.

Several days ago, Israeli authorities expelled a Palestinian family from its Sheikh Jarrah home after a court ruled in favour of a claim to the house by Jewish settlers.

A number of right-wing Jewish religious groups are waging a campaign to take over homes in Arab parts of east Jerusalem in order to strengthen Israel's hold on the city.

Israel occupied Arab east Jerusalem in 1967 and illegally annexed it as part of the country's "eternal capital" but its claim is not recognised by the international community.

Palestinians hope to make Arab east Jerusalem the capital of an independent Palestinian state.



BIKE CAMPAIGN FOR CLEAN AIR: Cyclists in colourful costumes take a rest as they prepare for another run during the Tour of the Fireflies bike tour in suburban Manila on Sunday. The event is part of Earth Day celebrations and aims to promote cycling in their clean air campaign (AP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Riots kill dozens in Baghdad suburb'

DUBAI (AFP) — Clashes erupted between Iraqi protesters and security forces in a suburb of Baghdad last week, leaving dozens of people dead, Arabic newspaper Al Hayat reported Sunday. Citing "trustworthy sources," the London-based newspaper said the rioting erupted when security forces attempted to prevent worshippers taking part in Friday prayers at the Al Hikmah Mosque in the northern Baghdad suburb of Saddam City on April 16. It said a hospital close to the suburb had signed more than 250 death certificates. The following week, a colonel in charge of prison security and several other people were killed in an attack on a house near the mosque that was being used as a temporary headquarters for security forces. Al Hayat said, Armed groups also attacked offices of the ruling Baath party in Baghdad, the paper added. Iraqi officials quoted by the newspaper said the protests were held to mark President Saddam Hussein's birthday on April 28.

Sharon to visit Vatican on Monday

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel's Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon will hold talks at the Vatican on Monday on a row between Christians and Muslims that threatens millennium celebrations in Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. Israeli officials familiar with the issue said Sharon, whose visit will include an audience with Pope John Paul, would tell senior Vatican diplomats that Israel was eager to achieve a compromise in the dispute. Muslims want to build a large mosque in Nazareth on contested land below the Basilica of the Annunciation, where Christians believe the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary to tell her she would give birth to Jesus. "It's going to be discussed at the Vatican, that's for sure," one Israeli official said. "We are going to reiterate our hope to see a compromise. The millennium is a year of peace, not a year of conflict."

Informers charged over Rabin killing

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A former Israeli secret service informer was charged Sunday with failing to prevent the 1995 murder of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Avishai Raviv, a right-wing Jewish extremist suspected of inciting right-wing comrades to activism, is accused of failing to inform his superiors about plans by convicted assassin Yigal Amir to kill Rabin. Raviv, codenamed "Champagne," was secretly paid by Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, to inform on his militant associates. According to the indictment presented to a Jerusalem district court, Raviv was told by Amir of an earlier plan to kill Rabin in 1995. However, he is not suspected of involvement in the murder itself. Raviv, who is also accused of belonging to a "terrorist organisation" over his creation of an extreme right-wing group known as Eyal, has rejected the charges. Shin Bet has been opposed Raviv being put on trial, fearing it would reveal details about its methods, but it changed its mind amid rumours that Rabin's assassination was the result of a conspiracy involving the agency.

Khatami to visit Damascus in May

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami next month will make his first visit to Syria since he took power in 1997, the official IRNA news agency reported Sunday. It said the subject of Khatami's visit was being discussed by Iran's ambassador to Damascus, Hossein Sheikholeslam, and Syrian Information Minister Mohammad Salman. It did not give specific dates for the visit.

Algerian army kills nine rebels

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian security forces killed at least nine armed Islamists in the northeastern Bouira region last week, press reports said Sunday. While the daily El Watan said nine Islamists had died in Wednesday's incident, Sawt Al Ahbar, the paper of the one-time ruling National Liberation Front, put the figure at 13 and other papers said the army had used artillery and helicopters armed with rockets. A civil defence group killed two armed Islamists on Friday in the same department, according to Al Khabar. Militia leader Hassan Hattab eluded security forces during these incidents and is preparing an escalation of his operations to show that he "is still a terrorist leader capable of serious disruption," the L'Authentique newspaper reported.

Saudi beheaded for murder

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi man was beheaded by the sword Sunday in the west of the kingdom for the murder of a fellow national, the official SPA news agency said, quoting an interior ministry statement. Sultan Ben Abdullah Ben Dhiab Al Salmi shot Ayedh Ben Awad Ben Dhiyallah Al Matiri following an argument, the statement said. It was the 12th execution announced this year in Saudi Arabia.

Fateh joins opposition in urging state on May 4

Palestinians want deadline on any interim period extension

Agencies

ALL EIGHT PLO factions, including Yasser Arafat's own Fateh faction, joined together Sunday in calling on the Palestinian President to resist international pressure to put off the declaration of an independent Palestinian state.

"The PLO factions insist the transitional period of autonomy should not be extended in any way," said a joint statement issued by the eight factions.

"It is necessary to announce the sovereignty of the state of Palestine on May 4 on the occupied land within the borders of June 4, 1967, including Arab [east] Jerusalem," the statement said.

The PLO's 124-member Central Council is to meet on Tuesday in Gaza, under the leadership of Arafat, to vote

on a course of action for May 4, when the five-year interim period set out in the 1993 Oslo peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians comes to an end.

Arafat insists the Palestinians have the right to proclaim a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on May 4.

But Palestinian officials say Arafat could delay a statehood declaration, as urged by world leaders, in exchange for international pledges to recognise the Palestinians' right to independence at a later date.

The other seven PLO factions which signed the statement were the two main PLO opposition factions, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), as well as the Palestine Liberation

Front, the Palestine People's Party, the Palestinian Democratic Union, the Arab Liberation Front and the Palestine Popular Struggle Front.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians are seeking a deadline from the United States before agreeing to any extension to an interim period in peace accords, a senior official said Sunday.

Arafat's top negotiator, Saeb Erekat, told the Palestinian Legislative Council on Sunday that Arafat was awaiting U.S. views on a deadline before proceeding.

"We are trying to set a time for the end of the interim period and we are continuing consultations and negotiations with the Americans," Erekat said.

The European Union recently backed a year extension, and recognised

Palestinian aspirations to statehood.

Erekat said the Israelis have told the Americans they want an open-ended extension of the interim period.

U.S. embassy spokesman Larry Schwartz said he had not been briefed on the latest negotiations but that, as far as he knew, U.S. policy was still "a commitment to expeditious final status negotiations without setting a final date."

A spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had no comment on Erekat's report of the Israeli request, although it would be consistent with recent government pronouncements.

Also Sunday, the spiritual leader of the militant Hamas movement, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, said he was considering attending a PLO meeting in Gaza called to decide whether to declare a

Palestinian state in May.

Yassin said the PLO invited him and three other Hamas members to the Palestinian Central Council (PCC) meeting on Tuesday as observers. Hamas is not among the 11 Palestinian groups which make up the PLO.

"This is the first such invitation for us to attend a PLO meeting," Yassin told Reuters. "We are studying whether to attend."

A Palestinian official said officials from the militant Islamic Jihad group were also invited to attend the PCC meeting.

Yassin said, although Hamas differed with the Palestinian National Authority over the kind of state that would be formed, it believed "any step that rids the Palestinians of the Oslo deals is a step in the right direction."

Likud threatens to cancel peace accords over Palestinian state

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's ruling Likud party warned Sunday that it would cancel the Oslo peace accords if the Palestinians declare an independent state.

"In the event of a unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian state, the Israeli government will react immediately and cancel the autonomy accords," Likud election campaign chief, Moshe Katrav, said.

In its election manifesto for the May 17 elections, the right-wing Likud said it was against a "sovereign and independent" Palestinian state and called for negotiations on Palestinian self-rule.

It said the rights of a Palestinian entity must be restricted on issues such as foreign affairs, security, immigration, water resources, air space and the environment.

Likud, headed by Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, also insisted that Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem, including the eastern sector occupied in 1967, was not negotiable.

But Likud did not make any reference to repeated warnings by Netanyahu that Israel would annex parts of the West Bank still under its control if the Palestinians declare a state.

The PLO is meeting on Tuesday to discuss the issue.

Likud also vowed to strengthen its hold on the occupied Golan Heights but did not explicitly rule out any territorial concessions on the strategic plateau it captured from Syria in 1967.

"The government will act to strengthen the Israeli presence on the Golan and to revive negotiations with Syria without any conditions," it said.

Algerian opposition warns of new government crackdown

ALGIERS (R) — Opposition leaders criticised the Algerian government on Sunday for banning a street protest over alleged vote-rigging, saying the move heralded a crackdown on political activity under the rule of the new president.

"We denounce that decision and we reserve the right to sue the authorities behind a ban which confirms our warnings that political activities and freedom of expression will be stifled under the new leadership," they said in a statement.

The authorities said the opposition could hold an indoor gathering, but it was not authorised to stage a street demonstration which could threaten public order.

The statement was signed by main secular opposition leader Hocine Ait Ahmed, former prime ministers Mouloud Hamrouche and Mokdad Sifi, ex-Foreign Minister Ahmad Taleb

Ibrahimi, Islamist Abdullah Djaballah and former presidential adviser Yousef Khatib.

The six politicians had been candidates for the presidency before they withdrew on the eve of the April 15's poll over alleged vote fraud, leaving former Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika the only contender.

They vowed to stir opposition against Bouteflika's rule, including the use of street protests, to bring about what they called a "true democracy."

Bouteflika, 62, favoured by the dominant military, was declared the winner, taking some 7.4 million of the 10.5 million votes cast, according to the authorities.

He would officially take over from his predecessor Liamine Zeroul on Tuesday, Liberty and Al Alam Assassi newspapers reported on Sunday.

The opposition insists that between 75 per cent and 80 per cent of the voters boycotted the election, saying it did not recognise the results which it dismissed as "illegal and unconstitutional."

The government had said that 60.9 per cent of Algeria's 17.5 million electorate cast their ballots.

A spokesman of the six opposition leaders said they would meet on Sunday to consider their strategy after the authorities put a ban on their street protest planned for Monday.

An emergency law in place since early 1992 gives the government huge powers over political activity, including banning street protests and other gatherings.

Bouteflika vowed to end the country's seven years of violence which has so far claimed more than 70,000 lives. He promised to give details of his policy when he takes office.

Ecevit's election victory confirmed by official results

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's acting Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and his Democratic Left Party (DSP) have been confirmed as the winners of last week's general elections by preliminary official results published by the election board on Sunday.

The DSP took 22.2 per cent of the vote according to the results carried by the Anatolia news agency, well up from its share of 14.6 per cent in the last elections of December 1995.

The ultra-right Nationalist Action Party

(MHP) more than doubled its share to come in second at 18.0 per cent (1995: 8.2 per cent).

The pro-religious Virtue Party came third with a share of 15.4 per cent, sharply down from the 21.4 per cent its predecessor, the Welfare Party, won in 1995.

And the formerly powerful conservative parties led by Mesut Yilmaz and Tansu Ciller, the Motherland Party (ANAP), and the True Path Party (DYP), dropped to 13.2 per cent and 12.0 per cent respectively (1995: 19.7 and 19.2 per cent).

According to these results, the DSP will hold 136 of the 550 seats in the new parliament. The MHP will have 129 seats, while 111 seats will go to the Virtue Party, 86 to ANAP and 85 to the DYP. Three seats were won by independent candidates.

The official vote count confirms the demise of the Social Democratic People's Republican Party (CHP), which only scraped 8.7 per cent (1995: 10.7) thus failing to clear the 10-per cent threshold for representation in parliament.

CHP chairman Deniz

Baykal has already resigned.

The pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (Hadeep) also failed to overcome the 10-per cent hurdle at 4.8 per cent, nevertheless up from its 4.2 per cent in 1995.

The only other party to garner more than one per cent of the vote was the Grand Unity Party (BBP), an organisation combining nationalism with religious values which won 1.5 per cent.

Some 32.7 million out of 37.5 million eligible voters cast their mandatory vote for a turnout of 87.1 per

cent. The preliminary official results include the votes cast at the customs gates by Turks living abroad.

Out of an estimated two million expatriate Turks eligible to vote, only 66,000 travelled to Turkey to cast their vote.

Support for the DSP was even higher than average among expatriates, almost 30 per cent of whom cast their vote for Ecevit.

The Virtue Party also did much better among the Turks of Europe than at home, winning close to 23 per cent of the vote at the border polling stations.

Dutch police break up student party

AMSTERDAM (R) — Amsterdam riot police stormed a house on one of the city's main streets early on Sunday to break up a drunken party of up to 1,000 students after it deteriorated into an orgy of vandalism. Police sealed off Weesperstraat, a major traffic artery, after revellers under the influence of drink and drugs started throwing household goods from the windows of the house onto the road below, police spokesman Arie Zandbergen said. He said police had monitored the party, attended by an estimated 1,000 students, throughout the night and had moved to evacuate the building at around 3:00 a.m. as the revelry spiralled out of control. "Several dozen police in riot gear went in to clear the building after students started throwing televisions, refrigerators and fire extinguishers onto the street," Zandbergen said.

Taiwan gangs provide stipends

TAIPEI (AP) — As a sort of mafia scholarship, Taiwan's gangs are paying the tuition of some university students in exchange for service as accountants or other skilled professionals after graduation, media reports said Sunday. Gang fronts operating as finance companies will pay school fees and monthly stipends of 30,000-40,000 Taiwan dollars (\$900-\$1,200) for needy students, newspapers and television said, quoting from a police report on gang recruiting tactics. Students then hand over school transcripts and identification and sign a "contract" agreeing to work for the gangs for an unspecified number of years.

Law journal lists 'stupid judge tricks'

NEW YORK (R) — One judge asked a woman defendant out for a drink, another was reputed to brandish a gun in chambers — it's all in a special "stupid judge tricks" edition of the National Law Journal. "Ticket-fixing and drunk driving, the staples of most judicial conduct actions, don't count here," the paper reports. "These are stories of sheer, what-were-they-thinking? injudiciousness." The NEJ said the judges mentioned in the story had all left or been removed from the bench in the last year. One was James Scandrinio, a former Michigan state judge who was scheduled to sentence a 22-year-old college student on a drunk driving charge. Scandrinio asked the woman to meet him at a bar on a Saturday night to discuss the case, the journal said.

Clergy warned against indulgence

WARSAW (AFP) — Poland's bishops warned the clergy Sunday against becoming too attached to a life of luxury. At a weekend meeting of the Polish synod in Gniezno, western Poland, bishops warned: "It is demoralising to see priests and monks becoming too attached to money, surrounding themselves with luxury goods, using luxury cars, charging high prices for pastoral services and lacking compassion for the financial difficulties of many families." The synod heard of several cases of customs fraud involving the importation of cars by Polish clergymen.

British cow escapes abattoir

LONDON (AFP) — A cow which dodged death at an abattoir in Devon, southwest England, last week, has been bought by an animal rights group which managed to raise 1,000 pounds to save her. The young cow, named Liberty after it fled the slaughterhouse, had been transported from the farm where she was born to an abattoir in the small town of Kingsbridge. She escaped by charging her would-be killers and fleeing across the town, pursued by police, who were unable to nab her even after calling in the assistance of a helicopter.